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## Westwater Lost and Found

Mike Milligan

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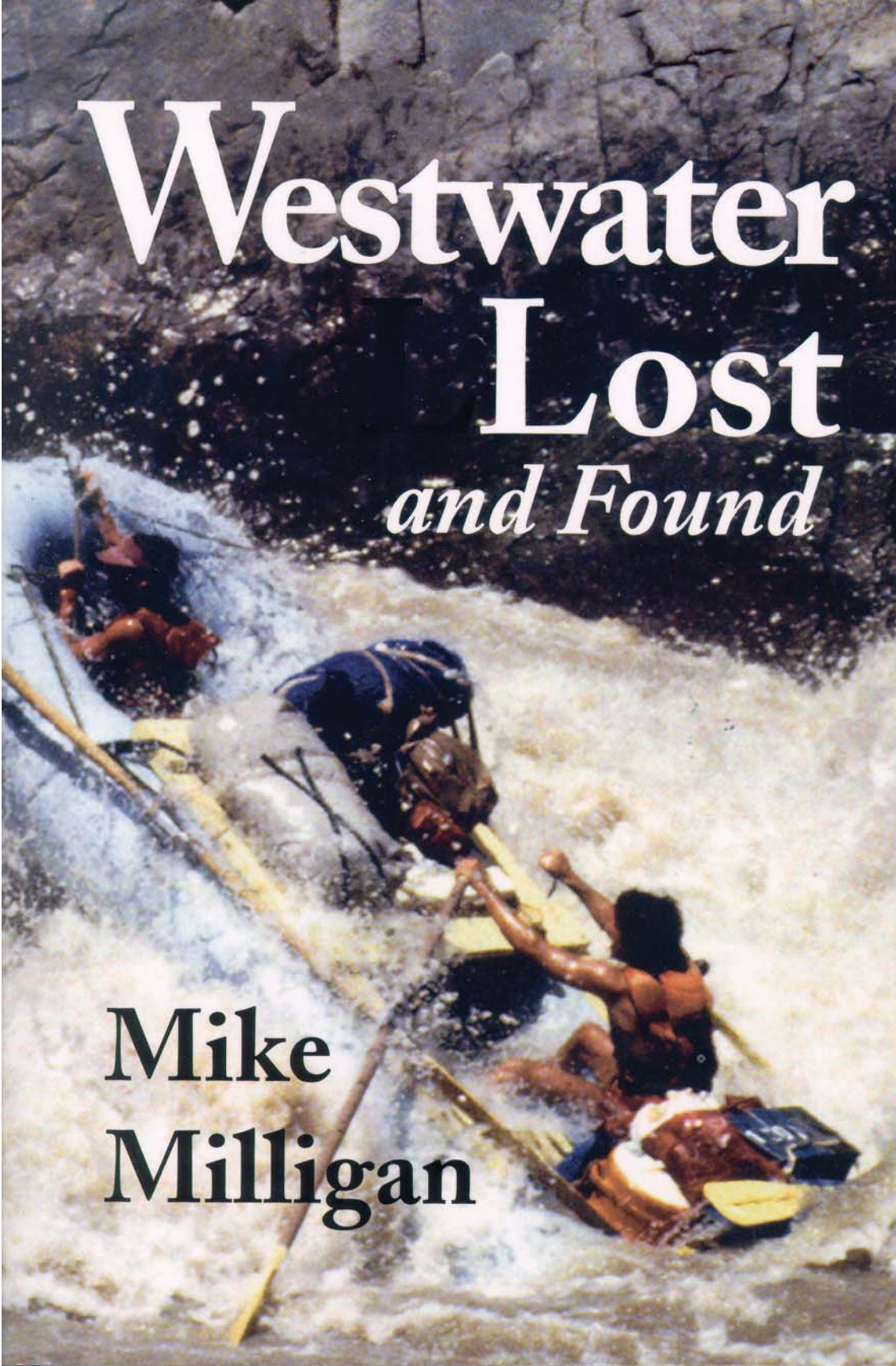
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### Recommended Citation

Milligan, Mike, "Westwater Lost and Found" (2004). *All USU Press Publications*. 145.  
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# Westwater Lost *and Found*

**Mike  
Milligan**

Westwater Lost  
and Found



Westwater Lost  
and Found

Mike Milligan

Utah State University Press  
Logan, Utah  
2004

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Utah State University Press  
Logan, Utah 84322-7800

Cover design by Richard Howe.

Cover photographs:

Catching air rising out of the hole at Skull Rapid. Photo by Mike Milligan.  
Margaret and Dick Durrance, Ted Steinway, and a farmer (probably Emmett  
Elizondo) at Westwater in 1950. Margaret Durrance photo.

Ulrich Martins watches Ted Young run Funnel Falls on the first kayak trip  
through Westwater Canyon on August 16, 1962. Joseph M. Lacy photo  
courtesy of Mayme Lacy.

E. C. and Lula Malin at their Westwater ranch with their dog Fritz. Photo  
courtesy of Ila B. Reay.

Manufactured in the United States of America.  
Printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Milligan, Mike, 1954-

Westwater lost and found / Mike Milligan.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-87421-572-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

**ISBN 0-87421-490-4 (e-book)**

1. Westwater (Utah)—History. 2. Westwater (Utah)—Description and  
travel. 3. Colorado River (Colo.-Mexico)—History. 4. Colorado River  
(Colo.-Mexico)—Description and travel. I. Title.

F834.W477M55 2004

979.2—dc22

2003024239

To “Pete,”

Pauline Peterson Milligan Lambert





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## Preface

On September 10, 1998, I pulled into Westwater during the night and, after setting up camp, approached the launch near the ranger station. The reflection of the moon allowed me a limited view of the Colorado River. The night was still with what seemed like billions of stars set against a dark sky, and the only sound was that of the river's current slowly flowing past me. It was a time for me to reflect and realize it had been fifteen years since I last ran the canyon below. It had not, however, been fifteen years that I had forgotten Westwater. In fact a good portion of my time away had been spent researching whatever information existed about the canyon and surrounding area. I had come back a few times to hike nearby as part of my research, but each time I bypassed the river. Being there that September night was not the same as it was in 1983 when I last ran as a river guide for Western River Expeditions. From 1978 through 1983, I worked primarily Cataract, Desolation, and Westwater Canyons, as well as a few Grand Canyon trips. In this time I developed an interest in the history of each of these areas. As I became more knowledgeable about the history of the Colorado and Green Rivers I found it was a great asset for me as a professional river guide to be able to share the information with customers as we traveled the waterways together. Unfortunately there was little that had been published about Westwater Canyon other than what was in Belknap's *Canyonlands River Guide*.

Before putting on to the river the following morning, I visited with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) ranger Alvin Halliday to ask about any new historical information that may have surfaced during my absence. A few pieces of updated history had filtered up through the years, but not much that would change the story as it existed fifteen years earlier. Westwater was still

considered one of the little-known regions along the Green and Colorado Rivers with little more to say about it than to advertise a wild and scenic river trip.

I was a bit disturbed when I later learned others were just discovering pieces of history that I had known for at least ten to fifteen years. It reminded me of my first attempts to gather Westwater data by contacting a known river historian. A seemingly good contact and extremely interesting, he shared bits and pieces of river history along both the Green and Colorado Rivers. During our few conversations he indicated that he knew a lot about Westwater. However, he had gone through the canyon only once and was not overly impressed by it. He had no interest in the area, much less a desire to write about it. Moreover, though he claimed to have historical information that could be useful to another historian such as me, he was only willing to share it for a price. I was dismayed that he could possibly let the history die or put a price on its survival. At that point I resolved that I would share the information I found.

Inexperienced as a historian, I began by researching those who had boated the canyon of Westwater. Later I expanded my research to other aspects of the human history of the area. With some excitement, I corresponded with individuals whose works I had read or who to me were historical figures, including Don Harris, Pearl Baker, C. Gregory Crampton, Les Jones, P. T. Reilly, John Hoffman, Jackson Thode, Charlie Hunt, and Frank Wright. What originally prompted this research may best be explained by my journal entry dated August 22, 1981.

Probably the most interesting thoughts that came to me this day occurred as I was driving alone between Hanksville and Crescent Junction. I'd thought about all the times I'd been through all of this country and how little I know of its history, geology, botany, and animal life. I've had the feeling lately that I've come across this job as a means of getting my education, and there's something more that I don't know yet. I feel as though I'll be back until my education is finished. So on thinking about all of this beauty I've lived with for over three summers, I feel determined to learn more and become not only an expert oarsman, but also an open book to the stories these canyons have to tell . . . I also want to write a good article on Westwater after my studies.

Until now, twenty-two years later, I have only shared what has appeared in a few articles I wrote for the Moab periodical *Canyon Legacy*.<sup>1</sup>

I was further motivated by the tragic death of my mother in Westwater in 1983. Her accident was one reason I for many years performed my research from a distance, away from the river.

After conversing with Alvin Halliday, I was invited to join a group of various experts on a Westwater trip being organized by John Weisheit. I was not well acquainted with John, except for some brief correspondence in the early 1990s regarding the early Westwater river runners. The object of the four-day trip was to gather as much information about Westwater as possible from various experts, including geologists, biologists, river runners, and historians, as a start toward recording and publishing its story. The trip was quite enlightening, and though we encountered rain nearly every day, I was able to experience the canyon with renewed enthusiasm. Furthermore, our group made several discoveries that still need further exploration.

Researching Westwater has not been an easy task. Like many river enthusiasts, I originally focused solely on the historical river runners. By limiting my research to the river runners, I found there wasn't much more to say than what had been known for many years. There have been only a few additions in recent years to the list of river runners before the mid-1950s, where my list of pioneers ends. By that time less than twenty-five people are known to have successfully run the canyon. In contrast one hundred people had gone through the lengthier Grand Canyon by 1949. Of these one hundred people perhaps five had experienced Westwater. Fortunately, the river historian Otis "Dock" Marston did extensive research on the Colorado and Green Rivers for what was expected to be an exhaustive history of the people whose lives intertwined with the rivers. Although we are fortunate for the research Dock did, he did not complete his book due to his untimely death in 1979. The book was to focus on both major tributaries (the Green and the Colorado) leading into the Grand Canyon, but more particularly on the Green River, where history had developed starting with the fur trappers, then Major John Wesley Powell exploring the river's course, and others following him. While Marston did not ignore Westwater or the Colorado River above the confluence, he mostly mentioned

Westwater pioneers in the context of their following the river to Cataract Canyon, Glen Canyon, or the Grand Canyon where their experiences received fuller attention.

Once I had researched all I could on the river runners, it was a natural transition to switch focus from the river to the region around Westwater Canyon. My first introduction to life in the area away from the river was a recorded interview of a former Westwater resident, Owen Madox Malin. On April 23, 1978, Westwater ranger Maryanna Allred Hopkins, Dave Minor of the Bureau of Land Management, and river guide Blake Hopkins interviewed Malin at the Westwater ranger station. Owen was born on November 22, 1908, in Colorado, to Elwood Clark and Maggie Bryson Malin. He had an extensive Westwater genealogy beginning with his mother, Maggie. Commadore Perry Bryson moved his family to the tiny village of Westwater sometime between 1893 and 1896, residing in the vicinity of Westwater Creek. At the turn of the century he had one son, Walter, and three daughters, including Maggie, referred to as the “Bryson Belles.” The family raised cattle and broke wild horses until shortly after the turn of the century, when a fourth daughter, Gracie, died from burns she sustained while falling into their fireplace.<sup>2</sup> Overcome by the tragedy, the family moved.

Around 1898 Harvey Edward Herbert moved from Telluride, Colorado, to Westwater, leaving behind his wife, Bertha Malin Herbert. Ed Herbert was the stepfather to Bertha’s sons from a previous marriage, Charles E. and Elwood Clark Malin. By 1904, when Elwood was eighteen years old, he had moved to Westwater to join his stepfather. There he met Maggie Bryson, and on July 25, 1906, they were married. The marriage did not last long, and shortly after Owen’s birth his mother abandoned him. Her parents, who had moved to Idaho, took care of him. Elwood Malin remarried, and by 1918 he had invited his son Owen back home to Westwater. The Malins and relatives lived at and around Westwater for over forty years. Ed Herbert was a deputy sheriff and sheep inspector until his death on May 9, 1929. He also assisted Ellsworth Kolb and Bert Loper in 1916 when they made their historic Westwater Canyon run. Elwood Malin’s second wife, Lula, was the town correspondent for both the *Times-Independent* and *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel* for a number of years. My research time and again verified Owen’s credibility as

an authority on the history of Westwater. Thus the interview became a foundation for my work on the history of the community of Westwater. Unfortunately, Owen died on March 1, 1984, before I was far enough along with my research for a follow-up interview.

Most of those, like Marston and Malin, who might have been able to answer historical questions about Westwater are gone. All that remains are a few interviews, some correspondence from Westwater residents, the documentation of earlier researchers such as Marston, and old newspapers. I hope with this book to present as many pieces as can now be found to a puzzle that is incomplete—how incomplete we will never know. John Weisheit and others, though, have rekindled my desire to share what information I have.

The principal documentation for this book was written and oral history obtained from regional newspapers and from correspondence with and personal interviews of previous residents, river runners, and historians. Eventually historian and author Gary Topping convinced me that Westwater was not an island by itself and understanding its history meant understanding events that affected the region and the entire country. With this perspective, I was able to improve my history of Westwater by looking beyond its spot on the map. Despite much time and effort, I continue to feel there is much missing information, but so it is with history. Like geological unconformities in which certain strata are missing from an expected sequence in certain places, human history has its unconformities as well.

I can only hope that through my sharing of this material, many will gain a greater appreciation for the region of Westwater. Its story is not simply one of wild rapids, but one of people who tried to make an isolated place their home, who politicked for and promoted their location, who sought roads and industry to keep the place alive. Many who once lived there returned later, just as I did, to remember. I hope their history will now be added to the wealth of knowledge that has been gathered about the Colorado River further downstream.



The first time I observed the canyon of Westwater from a precipice above Skull Rapid, I was overwhelmed by the scene. It



was during an attempt to rescue a boat that had been drawn into the notorious Room of Doom, and I had tied my boat to a large boulder at the head of Bowling Alley Rapid and climbed above the rapid onto the Precambrian cliffs overlooking Westwater Gorge. Up to that time I had been a river-level observer who was impressed and frightened by the deep, forbidding canyon but hadn't taken the time to thoroughly enjoy its beauty. Standing above the canyon that day, I became enamored with a scene I would return to numerous times. The panorama from above the canyon presents an arch, interesting pyramidal buttes, huge Wingate sandstone cliffs, and the deep slit in the earth that makes up Westwater Gorge. Several years later I came across a title of a poem, written by Rossiter W. Raymond, that captured what I felt that day: "A Thought of God on Earth Expressed."

My exploration of Westwater has spanned several years, and numerous people have helped along the way. They may be separated into three groups since they came in at different phases of the research. In the beginning Dee Holladay generously allowed me to copy his Westwater files and a Westwater river runners' chronology that gave me a starting point. For many years afterwards I enjoyed an annual visit with Dee at his home to discuss river history and share notes. His files introduced me to Otis "Dock" Marston and the collection he left at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. Particularly helpful with the Marston collection at the Huntington Library were the associate curators, Virginia Rust and, currently, William P. Frank. Others who helped tremendously and have passed on were Dave Minor, who trusted me with an audio tape of his 1978 interview of Owen Malin; John L. J. Hart, a Denver attorney, explorer and collector of 1950 and early 1960 Westwater river-running history; and Willford Hill, who wrote one of the only known articles on the town of Westwater for the *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel* on August 23, 1981. Thanks also to their widows, Jane Kelsey Hart and Esla Spaulding Hill, who generously sent me their late husbands' research and notes.

Next, I cannot express enough appreciation to former Westwater residents Myrtle Holyoak, Beryl Marah, Jesse Gruver, Carolyn Hacker, and Gretchen Galyeon for their correspondence and interviews. Owen Malin's children, Dean Malin and Dorothy

Vario, were also extremely helpful with information regarding their father and his place in Westwater history. Especially fun and enlightening were several years of correspondence with Owen's younger brother, John L. Malin (Jack). He, like his brother, had a wealth of information that he willingly shared (except where the gold was hidden along the old narrow gauge railroad route), as did, more recently, his sister Ila Reay. Thanks also to Ruth M. Grennie, whose great-grandparents were located at Westwater and whose great aunt was Owen's mother.

River runners Don Harris, Les Jones, J. Frank Wright, P. T. Reilly, Joe M. Lacy, and Ulrich Martins helped me with their knowledge of and perspectives on Westwater Canyon. William I. Busenbark, nephew of Bert Loper, broke away from his busy schedule to help me with information about his uncle. Harold H. Leich's sons Harold M. and Jeff were very instrumental in providing me with information about their father. In addition to helping me, they donated considerable documentation of their father's 1933 Colorado River trip to the University of Utah. Perhaps someday Harold H. Leich's experience on the upper Colorado River will be published.

I am still amazed at the good fortune of locating and interviewing Roger Green, who supplied me with wonderful details about the christening of Skull Rapid. Ironically, Roger lived less than one mile from Dee Holladay and me at the time of the interviews. Correspondence, telephone interviews, and photos of Westwater from Dick and Margaret Durrance, members of the lost boaters party in 1950, gave me greater insight into their experience in the canyon. Also valuable was a brief but informative telephone call from author Paul F. Geerlings, who wrote the book *Down the Grand Staircase* and was a member of the first inflatable raft party through Westwater in 1950; and thanks to Bruce C. Martin, who provided further details of that experience.

Of the historians who helped along the way, thanks go to John F. Hoffman, Pearl Baker, James H. Knipmeyer, Lloyd M. Pierson, Roy Webb, and the railroad historian Jackson C. Thode, who admittedly claimed there was little history regarding Westwater and the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad but provided me with what was needed. Bill Suran assisted tremendously with Ellsworth Kolb information and photographs. Former

Grand County commissioner Jimmy Walker, who hiked into Westwater Canyon in 1955 with Sheriff John Stocks and rediscovered Outlaw Cave, prompted some valuable history to be recorded by means of a letter from now deceased former Westwater resident Elwood C. Malin. I am grateful to Charlie Hunt, whose original fieldwork in 1928 began with a geological survey that included Westwater. Geologist William L. Chenoweth helped me with information about the Salt Lake Wagon Road through Westwater.

I cannot begin to name all of the assistance I received from various libraries and museums, particularly in Moab, Utah, and Grand Junction, Rifle, Aspen, Lamar, and Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Thanks also to members of the BLM, and one particular person at the USGS who printed for me the daily river fluctuations from 1913 to 1987. The information helped me considerably as I tried to understand the river conditions many of the early boaters faced. Had I known what I was doing in 1987, I would have recorded his name so I could state it here.

I must thank John and Suzette Weisheit, who rekindled my desire to complete this research. The trip through Westwater in 1998 with Dusty Simmons (now Dusty Carpenter) as my river guide allowed me opportunities to explore the landscape throughout Westwater that I could not visit when I previously guided through the canyon. Dusty's husband Kyler, who is a BLM ranger at Westwater, helped me more recently. And I am grateful to geologist Wil Bussard, whose enthusiasm for rocks is truly contagious. I met him on Westwater exploratory trips in 1998 and 2000, and he helped me significantly with the discussion of the canyon's Precambrian rocks. And without the prodding of some friends from my employment, who asked for my assistance with their first Westwater run in September of 1998, I would not have met John, Suzette, Dusty, and Wil. There was considerable help and encouragement from the beginning to the end of my research from Gary Topping, former curator of manuscripts at the Utah State Historical Society and current instructor at Salt Lake Community College. And most recently Marianna Allred Hopkins, with Gary Topping, reviewed this document and unknowingly helped plant the seeds of extended research beyond the original manuscript. Marianna also lent her expertise on the

Westwater area, having been a ranger there and participated in the 1978 Owen Malin interview that eventually extended my research beyond the river corridor. I also cannot forget to thank Karla Vander Zanden. As a Westwater ranger in 1983 she was a good friend and someone who loved the canyon as I did, and she was still there fifteen years later to help me get a perspective on how to present this information.

And all along, there was my family. My wife Marla, who periodically kicked me out of the house and sent me in the direction of Westwater, and our children—Lindsi, Madison, and Buck—hopefully they did not feel too neglected during my absence working on this project. I cannot forget my river friends Roy Christenson, Doug Guest, Lew Grossman, Mark Nelson, Randy George, Loren Watson, and Gary Spackman when acknowledging those who helped me during the long years of research. While their help was indirect, their valuable friendship during the five years I worked for Western River Expeditions was important. I am grateful to Tyler Leary and John Alley for editing this work. I hope I have not missed anyone. And I thank God for the original prompting to study Westwater, for what reason I do not know, but without His help this would not have happened.

Finally, I wish to thank “Pete,” to whom this book is dedicated.

# 1

## First Touched by Man

### Beginnings

Following the Colorado River northwest of Grand Junction, Colorado, an Amtrak train travels on its way to Salt Lake City along tracks laid down more than one hundred years ago. Briefly the train loses sight of the river after passing Loma, Colorado, site of one of several boat launches for river running and canoe trips. Later the river and train meet again between the majestic Wingate sandstone cliffs of Ruby Canyon and travel together to the Utah border, where the land begins to spread out. The train travels five miles further to Westwater, which is said to refer to the place where the train begins to head west, away from the Colorado River. Approximately fifty miles beyond Grand Junction, the Amtrak reaches its lowest elevation at Westwater, where a lush valley briefly reveals itself before the train begins its push uphill, northwest through deserts and mountains toward Salt Lake City. Probably few passengers on the speeding Amtrak notice the small valley, where a large ranch sits centrally located about a mile from the tracks. Ignored, the valley leaves little for these passengers to appreciate. Yet it exists primarily because of the Rio Grande Western Railroad that began stopping here in 1890.

Though seldom noticed by the trains passing through day and night, Westwater is far from forgotten by tens of thousands of

river enthusiasts and whitewater vacationers who have been visiting in increasing numbers since the 1950s, when recreational whitewater rafting and kayaking became popular. From I-70 two exits (220 and 225) leave the pavement to join generally well-maintained gravel and dirt roads that eventually follow Westwater Creek toward the Colorado River until the creek ducks beneath a Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad bridge. Westwater Creek at this point is generally dry, with its source some twenty-six miles northwest in the Book Cliffs. It empties into the Colorado River at the head of Westwater Canyon. Just beyond the railroad bridge the road intersects with another dirt road that for many years was maintained for residents of Cisco and Westwater. The road southwest leads to Cisco; to the northeast is the Westwater ranger station and boat launch. The impressively maintained property that is fenced in to the southeast has been considered prime real estate for more than a century. Most years the ranch requires water pumps for its maintenance, but during extreme high water years such as 1983 and 1984 nearly the entire property was submerged. The ranger station and put-in that year became an island of the Colorado River. Currently the ranch raises cattle; formerly it belonged to Emmett Elizondo from Colorado, who ran sheep throughout this country beginning in the 1920s. Looking southwest beyond the ranch in the distance one sees cliffs of Wingate Sandstone that seem almost to pinch together. One cliff dominates above the rest and marks for those familiar with this part of the Colorado the gateway into Westwater Canyon.

The Westwater road follows the railroad tracks heading toward the Colorado River for about one mile before turning south to the launch. At this point, after driving on a dirt road for nine miles, most travelers are focused straight ahead. Few pay attention to this final mile before they put up camp for the night or begin rigging for their boating trips. Most private boaters miss everything since they seem to arrive throughout the night when the sky is blackened except for lights at Westwater Ranch and camp fires near the launch. This is unfortunate because this is where Westwater really begins. Taking a moment and looking up high on the Morrison bluffs, one will notice a few names painted or chiseled onto rocks. Most are dated in the 1920s and are likely

names of Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad employees. These names and what stories might lay behind them plant the first seeds of curiosity about the area.

The Westwater launch is reminiscent of a park. Though not grassy, it is sectioned off with plenty of picnic tables and camping facilities. Several large, magnificent cottonwood trees shade the flat where boaters spend their nights prior to their trips downstream. A large ship anchor and chain surround part of the facilities, and today, well-maintained restroom facilities exist where not long ago there were only smaller, smellier, hacienda-type outhouses. Numerous improvements have been made to the Westwater launch since 1983, when much of it was washed away by the high water. An old fallen cottonwood tree, approximately five feet thick, used to lie in the Colorado River alongside the launch, and a beaver spent much time there near the rigging boaters. Not nearly as shy as most beavers encountered along the river, this one refused to budge from its home amongst boaters until the river took the tree and probably left it at Hite Marina 174 miles away.

At night the various boating parties entertain themselves with music, stories, and other festivities. It is generally a comfortable camping atmosphere even with large numbers of visitors. The sky at night is dark, highlighting the stars in the heavens above, where the constellations clearly reveal themselves. Visitors can generally pick out planets, as well as satellites. Trains regularly travel past the park throughout the night but do not seem to affect many campers with their noise. The thundering trains seem to be as much a part of the experience at the Westwater launch as the roar of the rapids is a part of the canyon—and rightly so, the trains having been there since long before the boaters came. Coyotes howl far off in the distance as morning arrives, prompting boaters to stir and begin rigging for the whitewater below.

Nervous anxiety may be the best description of boaters and kayakers preparing for their runs of Westwater. Numerous stories and yarns are told of the horrendous hole at Skull Rapid, extreme endos in Sock-It-To-Me, or circulating in the Room-Of-Doom. And then there is the Rock of Shock, the Magnetic Wall, and Razor Rock, among other obstacles that have made four miles of

Colorado River some of the most talked about whitewater in the western states. In the eighty-eight miles from Loma, Colorado, to Moab, Utah, the Colorado River drops in elevation 480 feet with an average gradient of 5.5 feet per mile.<sup>1</sup> Of this total distance, in the seventeen miles from Westwater put-in to Cisco take-out the river drops approximately 155 feet with an average drop of 9 feet per mile. To further magnify these figures the four miles of river through the inner gorge of Westwater drops more than 75 feet for an average of approximately 20 feet per mile. The gradient, combined with the changing fluctuations of the river as it funnels through a narrow granitic crack in the earth, make each trip through Westwater a new experience. Knowing that the rapids are continually taking on different personalities, boaters are aware that sooner or later they can expect to flip and quite possibly have to swim through Skull Rapid—and a few have not survived. That is the nervous anxiety of boating Westwater. But still the canyon brings the same old boaters back, along with new friends every year, to enjoy the celebration after Last Chance Rapid of knowing they made another successful run.

Although the beginning of the seventeen-mile river run begins at Westwater's launch, the setting for the human history in this book begins four miles upstream at the Utah-Colorado border, follows along the banks of the Colorado River, and includes the once inhabited locations of May Flat, Jones Canyon, Little Dolores, and Westwater, where the combination of land and water attracted man to the area. We cannot fully comprehend the human history within Westwater Canyon without first learning what originally enticed people to the region. This historical journey, therefore, begins near the town of Westwater. Afterwards, we'll take to the river, follow it downstream from the head of Westwater Canyon through nearly ten miles of whitewater, and end the trip at Cisco.

Along the banks of the Colorado River through Westwater Canyon sites such as Wild Horse (or Miner's) Cabin and Outlaw Cave briefly introduce the region's history. Their remote surroundings generally prompt questions about their origins and how anybody could live at such locations. In the canyon, there are few side canyons that can be accessed from the river; even fewer can be reached by vehicle because of the difficult terrain



and an ongoing attempt to protect Westwater's wilderness. The short canyon is geographically protected to the south by the nearly uninhabited regions of the Dolores Triangle and Glade Park. Parts of the rim can be approached by four-wheel-drive vehicles, but the roads are not maintained and in some cases, due to ongoing wilderness study, traveling on them may be prohibited. It is considerably more difficult to reach Westwater through the southerly accesses because of poor road conditions and the distance from either Grand Junction or Moab. It seems inconceivable that anyone would reside in the remote confines of Westwater Canyon. And yet they did.

There are reminders at several strategic locations throughout Westwater that Native Americans were there. Near where Westwater Creek empties into the Colorado River, evidence of prehistoric Indians first appears in the form of faded pictographs painted on an eastern-facing sandstone cliff. Interestingly, all of the Indian rock art found in Westwater is at primary access points into the canyon and near additional water sources such as springs, washes, or creeks.<sup>2</sup> The pictographs (painted) and petroglyphs (pecked, incised, or carved graphics) are located where the Colorado River is tranquil—above or below whitewater—and where crossings may have occurred. In addition to the paintings at Westwater Creek, Indian rock art is found at Little Hole, Little Dolores, and Cottonwood Creek, and some has been reported at the mouth of Agate Wash.

The Indian graphics are not extensive, and in a few locations they are difficult to find because of fading and their small size. The Little Hole glyphs are the best known rock art in the canyon. On a cliff near the top of the canyon are several scattered images, which include an elk. The most noticeable graphic at this location is a parade of bighorn sheep on a large flat-surfaced rock. Within the canyon, there is little evidence that might help archeologists determine which Indian cultures created the rock art and why they were in the region.

In 1981, Dee Holladay of Holiday River Expeditions invited representatives from the University of Utah on a Westwater trip to examine the rock art. Their research resulted in brief descriptions that categorized most of the images as "probably Fremont." This synopsis seemed inadequate for the effort, but then, there

are no signatures that tie art to an individual artist in the pictographs and petroglyphs of the Colorado Plateau. Although efforts to date Indian rock art have improved over the past few decades, controversy remains over their reliability. Scientific dating has been attempted on the pigments from pictographs and on growths and deposits, such as desert varnish and lichen, that cover or surround the art. Other tests include dating soils, artifacts, and structures that are assumed to be associated with the people who made the graphics. A useful tool for visually determining the possible age of the art and thereby the identity of its artists is the patination of the pictographs. Patination darkens rock over time, producing desert varnish, and the darker the pictograph, the older the culture of its origination.

Although scientific dating and comparing patination of rock art can be speculative, we can reasonably assign some graphics to a historical culture when they contain images such as the Indian mounted on a horse located at Little Dolores.<sup>3</sup> This pictograph is considered to be Ute because the Ute culture was the predominant Indian culture in the region after horses were introduced sometime in the seventeenth century. Other familiar cultural images might include use of the atlatl (spear throwing device), the bow and arrow, or other recognizable artifacts associated with various cultures or periods.

Archeologists assign a rock art style, when they can, to a particular Indian culture; that style is then compared to other sites for similarities. Given that there were different artists, even from the same people, the logic is that styles were trendy amongst various cultures during different phases of their existence. One of the more recognizable rock art styles is attributed to the Archaic culture and named Barrier Canyon. Its ghostly anthropomorphic (human-like) shapes are found throughout the Colorado Plateau, including in Middle Canyon (which also is called Westwater Canyon), where Westwater Creek exits the Book Cliffs on its way to the Colorado River.<sup>4</sup> This and other rock art styles found nearby allow the reasonable assumption that there were four primary Indian cultures that over time inhabited or visited the Westwater region: Desert Archaic, Fremont, Anasazi, and Ute.

Paleo-Indians, members of an earlier culture, also likely came into the region, but they probably can be excluded as

artists at Westwater because there is no known rock art attributed to them. Excluding them as artists does not mean they did not enter the region. Paleo-Indians means ancient Indians and refers to the oldest known culture on the American continents. They are believed to have arrived in the New World by crossing the Bering Strait between eastern Siberia and Alaska. Primarily hunters, Paleo-Indians pursued mega-fauna (mastodons, woolly mammoths, giant bison, and other large game) across an exposed land bridge between 30,000 and 10,000 years ago, entering the New World. Once here, some followed their prey southward along the Pacific Coast and others down the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. Although there is no direct evidence of Paleo-Indians on the Colorado Plateau, artifacts from these people have been discovered in nearby New Mexico, confirming that they were near the region as early as 11,200 to 10,000 B.C.<sup>5</sup> It is conceivable that, being a nomadic people, these prehistoric Indians followed their prey into regions near Westwater; the remains of three mammoths have been unearthed in Grand County, Utah.<sup>6</sup>

The Archaic, or Desert, Culture, arrived next, in approximately 8,000 B.C., when a semi-arid climate similar to our own prevailed. This culture likely superseded Paleo-Indians after mega-fauna vanished at the end of the last ice age. Originally huddling near lakes and rivers where abundant game was found, Archaic Indians eventually ventured out in pursuit of larger game in the mountain regions. Living a hunter-gatherer existence, Archaic Indians learned to identify and utilize seasonal resources available to them as they strategically migrated on foot to familiar locations.

Food sources in the Westwater region would have included bighorn sheep (as depicted on the Little Hole petroglyph), deer, rabbit, mice, lizards, snakes, grasshoppers, and various seeds from grasses. But over time Archaic Indians' diets became increasingly diverse as they ate a greater variety of small and large animals and increased their consumption of seeds, nuts, and plants. Understandably, as their diets diversified so did the tools they used for hunting, gathering, and processing their food and making clothing. The final phase of the Archaic Desert culture included agriculture after maize (Indian corn) was introduced to the region in approximately 400 B.C. and became an important supplement to some Archaic Indians' diets. Although

they did not rely exclusively on agriculture, the Archaic Indians' ability to count on a supplemental food source facilitated an increasingly sedentary lifestyle. They began storing surplus foods in granaries near favorite camps, which allowed them to reduce their travel and remain at a location for an extended time. It is possible that with this somewhat sedentary life, their religious beliefs became more elaborate as they continued to reverence the resources that provided them with sustenance and express their gratitude and beliefs in the form of rock art.

Identifying the Indians at Westwater becomes even more complicated following the Archaic period. From approximately A.D. 400 to A.D. 1350 Anasazi and Fremont Indians lived contemporaneously with each other in regions along the Colorado River. In fact the Colorado River has often been considered an approximate dividing line between the two cultures—the Fremont living north of the river and the Anasazi to the south. Though the two were contemporary, archeologists don't agree on whether the Fremont were related to the Anasazi. Some believe the Fremont, similarly to the Anasazi, "developed out of the existing groups of hunters and gatherers" of the region.<sup>7</sup> Evidence exists that the two peoples traded with each other along the Colorado River, but that trade did not extend much deeper into the Fremont region to the north. In fact some archeologists have had difficulty determining whether some of the sites along the Colorado River are Anasazi or Fremont because the digs produce a considerable number of artifacts from both cultures.<sup>8</sup> Also, the rock art in the Colorado River region is difficult to assign to a specific culture because there are overlapping stylistic influences.

Fremont Indian sites are generally identified by a distinctive gray pottery and, in some cases, clay anthropomorphic figurines. Even among various so-called Fremont sites, there are considerable differences, except usually for the recognizable gray vessels, from region to region. Hence, Fremont is a somewhat artificial category, covering varied prehistoric remains that may represent diverse groups. Jack Marwitt in 1970 attempted to classify the Fremont Indians into several different variants because of these differences. He listed the variants as Great Salt Lake, Sevier, Parowan, Uinta, and the San Rafael.<sup>9</sup> Westwater would be included in the San Rafael Fremont classification.<sup>10</sup>

The Fremont and Anasazi cultures coexisted during a period when there was an environmental shift to warm, wet summers, which contributed to their becoming dependent on agriculture. The wetter climate allowed members of both cultures to develop a horticultural lifestyle because of the longer summers and cooler temperatures. Though the Fremont did not work the ground as extensively as their neighbors, many of them still depended on it. One of the factors given for the abandonment of the area by both of these cultures was that the climate became too dry and cold for horticulture.

Nearly as soon as the Fremont Indians mysteriously disappeared, the Utes established themselves throughout Utah and western Colorado. Some theorize the Fremont and Ute are one and the same, based upon similarities in their rock art. The most accepted theory is that the Utes entered the region from the southwest corner of the Great Basin in southern California between A.D. 1000 and 1300, either pushing the Fremont Indians out or replacing them in areas they already had departed. The primary evidence for the Utes entering Utah from the Great Basin is that their Numic language is related to the languages of the Shoshoni and Paiute Indians who live further west and apparently originated from the same location. The Utes claim they have always been in their historical homelands.<sup>11</sup>

The Ute Indians were hunter-gatherers, similar to the earlier Archaic Indians. Until they acquired the horse in approximately A.D. 1680, they traveled by foot and carried only essentials from camp to camp, leaving heavier items behind as they made their seasonal migrations, which usually took them to higher elevations where seeds and berries were ripening during the summer and fall months and to warmer, lower elevations during the winter. Temporary wickiup shelters were built with willows, juniper bark, and grass. Teepees were not used until after the horse arrived and they could be transported to the various camps.

As implied above, the introduction of horses to the Utes created dramatic cultural changes for them. Jan Petit wrote: "The acquisition of quantities of horses changed Ute lifestyle faster than any other event in their history. The style of Ute homes changed as did the quantity and quality of clothing, food,

weapons, and the nature of Ute social structure.”<sup>12</sup> First to make use of the horse were the Utes of Colorado, who became familiar with them while serving as slaves and servants in New Mexico after the Spanish settled there around 1598. Then in 1680, the Pueblo Rebellion freed many of the Ute slaves and servants from their Spanish taskmasters and made numerous horses available to them. By 1776, when the Catholic Fathers Escalante and Domínguez searched a route from Sante Fe to California, they found horses among the Utes throughout Colorado and bordering parts of eastern Utah. As they traveled north from the Gunnison River east of Westwater, the Escalante and Domínguez party met eighty mounted Ute Indians.<sup>13</sup> Farther west the Utah Utes were at a disadvantage until they acquired horses in the early 1800s. With horses, Utes extended their hunting grounds to include the plains, for bison, and their great horsemanship made them feared warriors. Understandably, the importance of horses in Ute lives showed up in their rock art.

There were numerous bands of Utes, depending on the territory of Utah and Colorado that they occupied. Identification of a specific Ute group in the region of Westwater and surrounding Grand County has not been conclusive and suggests that the region may have been used for hunting by various Ute bands rather than for continuous residence. In his history of Grand County, Richard A. Firmage wrote that “Grand County was an area frequented by many different Ute groups” that included the “Weeminuche band of western Colorado, and other Ute bands such as the Parianuc Grand River Ute and the Tabeguache (Uncompahgre).”<sup>14</sup> Another possible band, the Seuvarits (Sheberitch), or Elk Mountain Utes, was primarily located in the La Sal Mountain region approximately thirty miles southwest of Westwater. Some maps intended to illustrate the borders of the different Ute bands suggest Westwater was within Parianuche—or Grand River—Ute territory, which extended along much of the Colorado, formerly the Grand, River in Colorado and eastern Utah.

The first contact settlers made with Ute Indians in Grand County occurred in 1855 when Brigham Young, prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, sent forty men under the leadership of Alfred N. Billings to establish a mission in the

vicinity of Moab for the dual purpose of teaching the Indians the Mormon gospel and establishing a settlement. Although the Utes frequently traded with Spaniards and Mexicans, mountain men, and the new Mormon visitors, they were suspicious of this attempt to settle deep in their territory. Referred to as the Elk Mountain Mission, the settlers arrived in the Spanish Valley (Moab) on June 15, 1855. Journals from the party indicate they were leery of the Indians at first because they saw so few of them. Eventually the Indians came around asking for presents or to trade.

The Mormons came to realize there was considerable Ute and Navajo traffic at their location near a major crossing of the Colorado River. Some stealing by the Indians occurred, and hostilities and threats arose among some of the Utes and Navajos. Then on September 23, 1855, after more than half of the Mormon settlers had left for Salt Lake City to visit their families, the Indians killed three missionaries.<sup>15</sup> The Mormons abandoned their mission and returned to their Wasatch Front homes. It was another nineteen years before another settlement in the region was attempted by cattlemen. There was further friction with the Indians in the sparsely settled region, but eventually the settlers prevailed.<sup>16</sup>

Utes remained in the Westwater and LaSal Mountains area at least as late as the 1880s. On September 13, 1892, a *Salt Lake Herald* headline stated, blaming white violence on Indians, "The Indians left there [Westwater] over ten years ago—yet the law of violence which they were wont to practice under seems to have remained and the white settlers who are possessing the country have been disturbed with not infrequent eruption in the way of bloodshed." The newspaper thereby implied that Utes had lived in Westwater Valley, but possibly the reference was to their more general, known inhabitation of the Grand Valley region that included Grand Junction. The headline probably referred to the 1881 Pinhook Draw Massacre in the La Sal Mountains, which left ten white men and twenty-two Indians dead. The Pinhook Draw Massacre helped provide Colorado with an excuse to expel the Utes to a reservation in Utah's Uinta Basin.<sup>17</sup>

We can be certain that Utes at least visited Westwater because horses were included in the Little Dolores petroglyphs.



Who created the other Indian rock art in the canyon remains speculative: the Desert Archaic, Anasazi, or Fremont? We can reasonably assume that more than one of these cultures appeared in the area from the numerous rock art styles located in Middle Canyon, approximately twenty miles north of Westwater, next to Westwater Creek in the Book Cliffs. There, at least five different techniques were used to create a montage of rock art. This indicates that clearly this was an important site for several cultures.<sup>18</sup> It was not uncommon for these peoples from different eras to follow the same trails. Commingling of campsites of various cultures can create difficulty for archeologists attempting to decipher the hodgepodge of artifacts and data from such sites.

The difficulty encountered trying to identify the Indian cultures at Westwater is not uncommon. Many Indian sites remain unidentified because of missing data. Although much is known about what became of the Ute and Anasazi, archeologists are not certain of the fate of the Paleo-Indian, Archaic, and Fremont cultures. Plenty of assumptions exist, but fragmented archeological findings make it impossible to positively connect prehistoric cultures with later Indian groups.

Unfortunately, a considerable amount of archeological evidence that might have cleared up some of the uncertainty about prehistoric Indians was lost to collectors during the past two centuries. Throughout the 1800s, explorers and surveyors gathered numerous Indian artifacts and shipped them to museums and private collectors in the East to be studied, displayed, and hoarded.<sup>19</sup> Private citizens continued the looting into the twentieth century. With no laws to protect ancient Indian sites, there was considerable interest among civilians in collecting artifacts and in cashing in on them. In 1897 two dentists, James E. Miller and O. D. Babcock, made a voyage down the Colorado River from Glenwood Springs through Westwater Canyon to the confluence with the Green River for the sole purpose of locating "Cliff Dwellers."<sup>20</sup>

In an attempt to halt major looting and destruction of Indian sites, Congress, on June 8, 1906, passed a law titled, "An Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities." Although the act may have protected some sites, it didn't deter some individuals from



collecting artifacts. In 1927, Moab's *Times-Independent* reported that several Westwater visitors hiked the canyons looking for Indian ruins.<sup>21</sup> Apparently no one was concerned that their activities might violate the 1906 act. It was not until the mid-1970s that federal and state governments began to enforce disturbances of historical Indian sites, citing anyone caught with pots, shards, arrowheads, or other ancient Indian artifacts. Penalties for damaging petroglyphs, pictographs, ruins, and archeological dig sites were also enforced.<sup>22</sup> In the nearly one hundred years after the Ute Indians were moved to reservations in 1881, it is reasonable to conclude that considerable evidence of Utah's Indian history was removed or destroyed.

The nearest known Indian occupation site to Westwater is approximately five miles to the south, near the Little Dolores River, which eventually empties into the Colorado River in Westwater Canyon. A 1956 report, titled *Archeological Investigation on the Uncompahgre Plateau at Glade Park*, gave details of artifacts and other cultural debris that were uncovered from several Indian caves along the Little Dolores River, including Luster Cave, named after the area's ranch owner.<sup>23</sup>

The Luster Cave dig produced numerous artifacts, including a variety of projectile points used for arrows and possibly spears, drills, scrapers, knives, beads, manos, metates, a few small potsherds (in colors ranged from brown to dark grey), and even a fish hook (not likely to have been used on the normally low volume Little Dolores River). One of the projectile points was considered an enigma, being much older than the rest of the artifacts. Dietary evidence included numerous bones and teeth of rodents and deer, maize, yucca fiber, acorns, pinyon nuts, and juniper berries. Of particular interest to the archeologists was a well-preserved antelope skull that was "wrapped in a juniper bark mat before burial."<sup>24</sup> No carbon 14 analysis or tree ring dating was completed, but a comparison of the artifacts found in Luster Cave with other previously examined sites suggested repeated Indian occupation between A.D. 900 and approximately A.D. 1300. These estimates correspond with late Fremont and Anasazi and possibly early Ute occupation. Maize comparisons placed the site after A.D. 1000.<sup>25</sup> The caves would have been within easy reach of Westwater by foot for hunting or fishing activities.



Sheep petroglyph at Little Hole. Is it a hunting scene or directions out of the canyon?



A Book Cliffs pictograph that Nina Bowen described as possibly a boat. Photo courtesy of Nina Bowen.

We will likely never know if any artifacts were taken from Westwater. Former Westwater resident John L. Malin said that there was a flint site near his father's ranch above Westwater Gulch where he found spear points and arrowheads.<sup>26</sup> In the same area, according to his sister Ila Reay, he found what she described as a basket, or sack, that held bones in it. The bones reminded them of knives or eating utensils.<sup>27</sup> Others have reported granaries near Cottonwood Creek, and a mano was found within the canyon. These are the only reported material evidences of possible occupation at Westwater. It seems unlikely that people lived in the deep canyon, but since the land surrounding Westwater Canyon was populated successively by Archaic, Fremont, Anasazi, and Ute Indians and numerous nearby rock art sites represent these cultures, Westwater may have been a route between places such as the Book Cliffs to the north and the caves of Glade Park to the south. It likely was primarily used by hunting parties but may also have been a river crossing for migrations to other regions.

The area offered a natural low water ford, but river crossings by boat might be supported by a speculative interpretation of rock art found in the region. In 1998, Nina Bowen wrote an article for a publication of the Utah Rock Art Research Association (URARA) describing images of possible boats that are found at several desert locations in Utah and northern Arizona.<sup>28</sup> One of the pictographs is located in the Book Cliffs. A photograph of the pictograph shows what she interprets as six figures on what could be a flat boat that has run onto a rock.<sup>29</sup> The closest navigable water to this image is the Colorado River between the state line and Westwater. One interpretation of the bighorn sheep (or quadruped) petroglyph at Little Hole is that it was created to give directions out of the canyon.<sup>30</sup> If true, this would imply that Indians being directed out of Little Hole arrived at the mouth of the canyon by some other means.

The first European credited as being in the area of Grand County and possibly in the vicinity of Westwater south of the Colorado River, was Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera in 1765. He certainly made it to Moab, according to his journal, which was found in Servicio Historico Militar in Madrid, Spain in 1969.<sup>31</sup> Rivera made two expeditions in 1765. Supposedly searching for

silver, he departed for his first expedition from Abiquiu in the Province of New Mexico on June 25, traveling in a northwesterly direction as far as the Dolores River in Colorado. There he named the river “el Rio de Nuestra Senora de Dolores, or the River of Our Lady of Sorrows, for Maria the Mother of our Savior.”<sup>32</sup> The discovery of his journals revealed that silver was not the actual reason for the expedition but that he was commissioned by the local Spanish government to “verify the existence of the Colorado River . . . and map the trail to its only purported crossing.”<sup>33</sup> The Utes in the area were suspicious of the Spanish military, so Rivera and his company entered the hostile land unarmed and disguised their intentions by seeking silver. Rivera returned to Santa Fe, New Mexico, at the end of July.

Later that same year Rivera was charged by the governor of New Mexico to return to the region for further exploration and to gather information about the Indians as he continued his presumed search for silver. In early October 1765, Rivera’s company returned by the same route to the Dolores River; only this time they entered into Utah, and after purposely being misled by Indian guides, they eventually arrived at the Colorado River near Moab. The Indians evidently did not want the Spanish explorer to know of the Ute Crossing of the Colorado there that eventually would become part of the Spanish Trail. Rivera’s journal indicates that on his return route he mostly followed the Colorado River east of Moab until he reached the vicinity of Professor Valley approximately forty miles downstream from Westwater. From there his description was that he “returned to Sante Fe by the shortest route at the speed of laden mules.”<sup>34</sup> Although it is unlikely Rivera’s expedition reached Westwater, his journal provides evidence that the Spanish had knowledge—though limited—of the region. Other expeditions likely followed.

In 1847 a story written by David H. Coyner, claimed that fur trappers James Workman and Samuel Spencer had separated from the mountain man Ezekiel Williams in 1809 and became lost. The pair thought they were following tributaries to the Rio Grande expecting to reach Santa Fe, New Mexico, but instead they inadvertently descended the Gunnison and Grand (Colorado) Rivers, possibly being the first English-speaking men in Grand County, Utah. David J. Weber who researched the

names and stories from Coyner's book, *The Lost Trappers*, dismissed the existence of the two mountain men and, as do other historians, believe their journey to have been fiction.<sup>35</sup>

Fictitious or not, it is likely that some mountain men visited the area in search of lucrative beaver pelts. Yet little evidence exists other than the Antoine Robidoux inscription located fifteen miles up Westwater Creek near the Book Cliffs. Translated, the inscription reads:

Antoine Robidoux  
Passed here November 13  
1837  
to establish a trading house on the  
river Green or White<sup>36</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Westwater Creek may have been a well-established Indian trail long before fur trappers entered the region. The creek bed provided an easy route for mountain men, railroad surveyors, and explorers to make their way to the Book Cliffs when traveling within the region between Grand Junction and Green River. A trapper trail following it was possibly the only feasible route heading north through the Book and Roan Cliffs to the Uinta Basin region. A document attributed to river historian Otis "Dock" Marston advanced this idea. He wrote:

The Book and Roan Cliffs together present a three thousand foot high barrier to passage, and I am not inventing the extent of this obstruction to prove some theory of mine, when I say that extending from the Colorado-Utah state line westward to Soldier Creek, considerably more than one hundred miles, there is no passable road across in this year of 1954. At one time a road was built up Westwater Canyon [Middle Canyon] and over the divide to some asphalt deposits. If there is any route through the Book and Roan Cliffs (in this long stretch) to the highlands of the Roan Plateau practical for a modern highway, Westwater Canyon will be the selection, with perhaps, no alternative.<sup>37</sup>

Marston noted that Lieutenant John W. Gunnison, who investigated a railroad route through the region for the United States War Department in 1853, mentioned "the number of heavy Indian trails leading in that direction which they crossed. Not all these trails led eastward along the route which Robidoux used.



Antoine Robidoux inscription located near Westwater Creek in Middle (Westwater) Canyon in the Book Cliffs.

Some kept to the south crossed the Grand River and ascended a difficult trail up the Dolores River into Color[ado]. . . .”

Kit Carson used the trail up Westwater Creek at least once when he was trying to locate some trappers who were reportedly in the Wasatch Mountains north of him. He “followed the Dolores River and the northern trail, or nearly so. At a Ute village he asked for a guide. A chief’s son, who had only an old, useless Spanish rifle, offered to go in return for a good rifle. Kit accepted. This young guide took the party up the Book Cliff Range by way of Westwater, crossed the summit and struck Twowater Creek, a branch of Bitter Creek, which led them to White River. The White took them to Ouray, where they found an adobe fort” that belonged to Antoine Robidoux.<sup>38</sup> The story does not indicate where Kit Carson crossed the Colorado River to get to the northern trail. Although there could be numerous Indian crossings between the mouth of the Dolores River and Westwater, it is conceivable that one ford, which would lead directly to Westwater Creek, was near the present Westwater ranger station.

During a road-building expedition from Camp Floyd in northern Utah to New Mexico, Colonel William Wing Loring noted in his journal on August 12, 1858, when his men were in the vicinity of Westwater: “Passing through this valley there are numerous Indian trails, leading to Salt mountain [Lasals] and to San Miquel and Dolores rivers.”<sup>39</sup> An interview conducted by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) ranger Linelle Wagner in 1982 with a former Westwater resident, Nee Ring Pennington, revealed that an old ford existed at Westwater. Pennington said that during low water her family could wade or take a four-wheel-drive vehicle across the river to the other side.<sup>40</sup> Ranchers as early as 1892 were making frequent visits from across the Colorado River to the railroad station at Westwater, some coming from as far as the Little Dolores River. Because of the numerous Indian trails in the vicinity of Westwater Creek and the Book Cliffs, Marston proposed that the Antoine Robidoux inscription was made as an advertisement for a trading post he briefly established north of that point between the Green and White Rivers.

Frenchman Antoine Robidoux was born into a family of fur traders. His father Joseph Robidoux II, had an independent trading establishment in St. Louis. The fur from beaver was used to



make felt hats that were quite popular for prominent Europeans. This ignited the penetration of mountain men into unexplored regions of North America. In the aftermath of Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821, Antoine and his brother Louis in the spring of 1824 left their other seven siblings to go to Santa Fe. Shortly after Antoine's arrival he joined a group of trappers headed by Etienne Provost to explore territory that eventually made up western Colorado and eastern Utah. Some of the party went as far north as Wyoming, where they sustained casualties at the hands of Arapaho Indians. Not discouraged, Antoine saw considerable potential for a trading post amidst the friendlier Ute Indians and the numerous beaver streams on the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

Politics briefly stood in the way of Robidoux's plans because Mexico owned the territory and was not allowing Americans to trap anything north and west of Santa Fe. Fortunately for Robidoux an option was given to foreign trappers that if they became Mexican citizens, they would be allowed to trap. Both Antoine and his brother took the opportunity. Four years after arriving in Santa Fe, Antoine married the Mexican governor's adopted daughter and shortly afterwards was given "what amounted to an exclusive license to trade and trap in what would someday become western Colorado and eastern Utah."<sup>41</sup>

Strategically located Fort Uncompahgre was built in 1828 near present day Delta, Colorado, two miles below the confluence of the Gunnison and Uncompahgre Rivers, within a reasonable distance to the California Trail, and nearer to a favorite Ute gathering place. The trading post relied heavily on trade with the Utes, and while it was in operation, until 1844, it not only traded furs and goods from Santa Fe but was also involved in illegal trade with the Indians that included firearms, Indian slaves, and a liquor called Taos Lightning. About the same time Fort Uncompahgre was built, William Reed and Denis Julien established a smaller trading post in northeastern Utah at the confluence of the Uinta and Whiterocks Rivers. Ken Reyher wrote, "Reed's Trading Post, as the enterprise came to be known, was little more than a one-room, log structure next to the river. Inventory was limited, and from a logistical standpoint (including the problems of supply and distance from Santa Fe), it was impractical for two men to maintain such an operation."<sup>42</sup> In



1832, a year after he was granted authorization for a second trading post by the Mexican government, Antoine Robidoux purchased Reed's Post. It became known as Fort Uintah. The Utes located in the region of Westwater and the LaSals probably traded at both of Robidoux's forts.

Between the years of 1830 and 1840 beaver fur began losing its fashion appeal, and prices dropped significantly. Robidoux experienced only minor competition within eastern Utah and western Colorado for almost a decade while the trapping business took a downturn. Toward the end of the 1830s, though, competition entered the Mexican territory as Hudson's Bay Company trappers based at Fort Hall in present-day Idaho moved south into Utah. With prices for beaver pelts dropping and the animals becoming scarce at the same time, it is assumed the Hudson's Bay trappers focused on Utah to increase their volume and compensate for reduced revenues. Although previous, smaller trading establishments in the area had not seemed to affect Antoine Robidoux, the Hudson's Bay move into his once exclusive domain did. Apparently he responded by deciding to establish a third trading post. Thus, he set out to establish Fort Robidoux near the Green and White Rivers and (according to Marston's theory) chiseled an advertisement for his new venture onto a rock.

Except for that inscription at Westwater Creek there is no evidence the trading house was actually built. It is assumed that if it was established it was only temporary and may have been a ploy to discourage the Hudson's Bay trappers. If so, the ploy did not work. In 1838 Hudson's Bay officials tried to build a trading post at the confluence of the Green and Duchesne Rivers. "Acting in his own interest and as a legitimate representative of the Mexican government, Antoine brought his own men to the site and attempted to confiscate the opposition's horse herd. Unable to put their animals out to graze for fear of losing them, the Hudson's Bay men soon abandoned their venture and returned to Idaho, leaving their adversary firmly in control of the Uintah Basin. Fort Robidoux was abandoned about the same time."<sup>43</sup>

An alternative possibility is that the Antoine Robidoux inscription was intended to advertise Fort Uintah, about which there is some disagreement concerning when it was purchased. Although historian Ken Reyher claims Fort Uintah was purchased from Reed and Julien sometime in 1832, after Robidoux received

permission from the Mexican government, other historians believe the purchase was around 1838, coinciding with the advertisement.<sup>44</sup> Historian Charles Kelly, on the other hand, believed that Robidoux was considering a third trading post in the vicinity of the White and Green Rivers that did not materialize. With little evidence of it being established, this could be correct, but if that trading post never existed, could the inscription have referred to Fort Uintah? Support might be found in a single letter from one word of the Frenchman's inscription. That word could be Wiyte, which Kelly theorized was Robidoux's phonetic spelling of the English word White in a mostly French inscription, or it might be Winte, an old spelling of Uintah.<sup>45</sup>

Another trapper who may have been in the Westwater area is the mysterious Denis Julien. Little is known about him except that he left inscriptions in several places along the Green and Colorado Rivers. It has been thought that he was a casualty of Cataract Canyon. However, his 1836 inscriptions appear to have been made going upriver, beginning with one in lower Cataract Canyon that is now under Lake Powell. Substantiated inscriptions continue upstream past the confluence and on to the Green River, where, at Hell Roaring Canyon, he inscribed what looks like a boat with the date of May 3, 1836. Still further upstream is the date May 16, 1836. The first indication of Julien's presence in eastern Utah was the establishment of Reed's Trading Post by him and William Reed around 1828. In 1831 he chiseled his first known inscription near the trading post at the junction of the Uinta and Whiterocks Rivers in northeastern Utah.

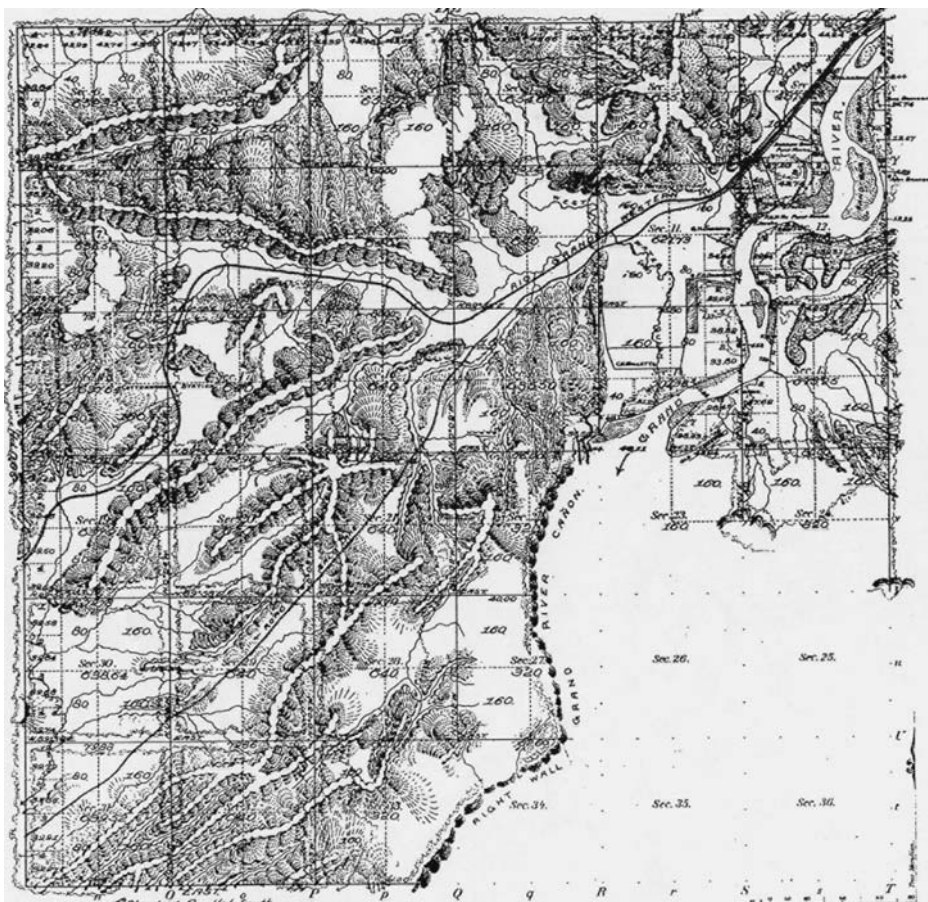
Julien's family may have followed the Robidouxes when they came down from Canada and settled in the St. Louis area in approximately 1771. Denis Julien probably was born between that date and 1775.<sup>46</sup> He remained in the St. Louis vicinity until the early 1800s when he traded with Indians in Iowa and later was granted a license to trade along the Missouri River. At some point after 1825 Denis Julien headed south to Taos, New Mexico, where he was employed by Antoine Robidoux's brother Louis. His first entry into Colorado and possibly eastern Utah was in 1827 with another brother, Francois Robidoux, to recover some furs that were cached on Ute land.

Little else is known of Julien. He may have gone to California to live sometime after 1844. That is the year of the last

reported Denis Julien inscription, in the Devils Garden section of Arches National Park. The validity of this inscription, dated June 9, 1844, has been questioned, but of the ten reported possible Julien inscriptions, this one is closest to Westwater. One argument in support of the inscription's validity is that in 1844 after Mexican militia killed ten innocent Ute Indians, captured three others, and took the camp's livestock, the Utes turned hostile towards intruders on their land. The Mexican volunteers were chasing renegade Navajos, who had raided several ranches near Santa Fe in 1843, when they happened upon the Ute camp. Although young Ute warriors wanted retribution for the murders, they were overruled, and a delegation of six Ute chiefs with over one hundred warriors rode to the city of Santa Fe on September 7, 1844, to address the crimes against them with the Mexican governor. Shortly after the meeting a fight broke out, and one chief was killed along with seven Ute warriors while trying to escape the city. The Utes went on a rampage, and in their course back home they left over one hundred Mexican men, women, and children dead. Not done, they headed to Antoine Robidoux's trading posts where, again, more Mexican employees were killed and the forts burned. Traders and trappers like Robidoux and Julien were no longer welcome in Ute territory.

Most of the known Denis Julien inscriptions were located near rivers and their tributaries, which is an argument against the validity of the Arches inscription. According to James Knipmeyer, the fact that Ute Indians in the region were hostile in 1844 is circumstantial evidence that the inscription is valid because frontiersmen would have shunned being out in the open and stayed away from the main trails under such conditions.<sup>47</sup> Some historians believe Denis Julien ended up going to California, where he later died. Although little evidence has turned up to substantiate this claim, Julien may have followed his former employer Louis Robidoux to California. Louis Robidoux purchased property in California in 1843 and by late 1844 had completed moving all of his family and belongings from Taos, New Mexico, to his new home in California.

He, like others, followed the Spanish Trail, the main branch of which crossed the Colorado River downstream from Westwater. Few of those who followed the trail in the 1830s and 1840s are known. It is likely, though, that some trappers reached



Frank Baxter's 1894 survey map showing "Road to Salt Lake" running diagonally from Rio Grande Western Railroad to bottom left of map. Survey and Township Map for T. 20 S., R. 25 E., BLM Information Access Center, Salt Lake City, Utah.

it by traveling through Westwater. Like Robidoux and Julien, numerous trappers worked the Green and Colorado Rivers and their tributaries with regularity between 1820 and 1840.

After the well-traveled Spanish Trail and Old Trappers Trail, the next oldest trail through the area passed directly through Westwater and was made for wagons. In the fall of 1878 Rollin J. Reeves was in the Westwater area surveying the Colorado and Utah border when he referred to the road in his notes. He wrote: "The only other road we encountered was what is known as the old Salt Lake wagon road. This is in better condition, has been

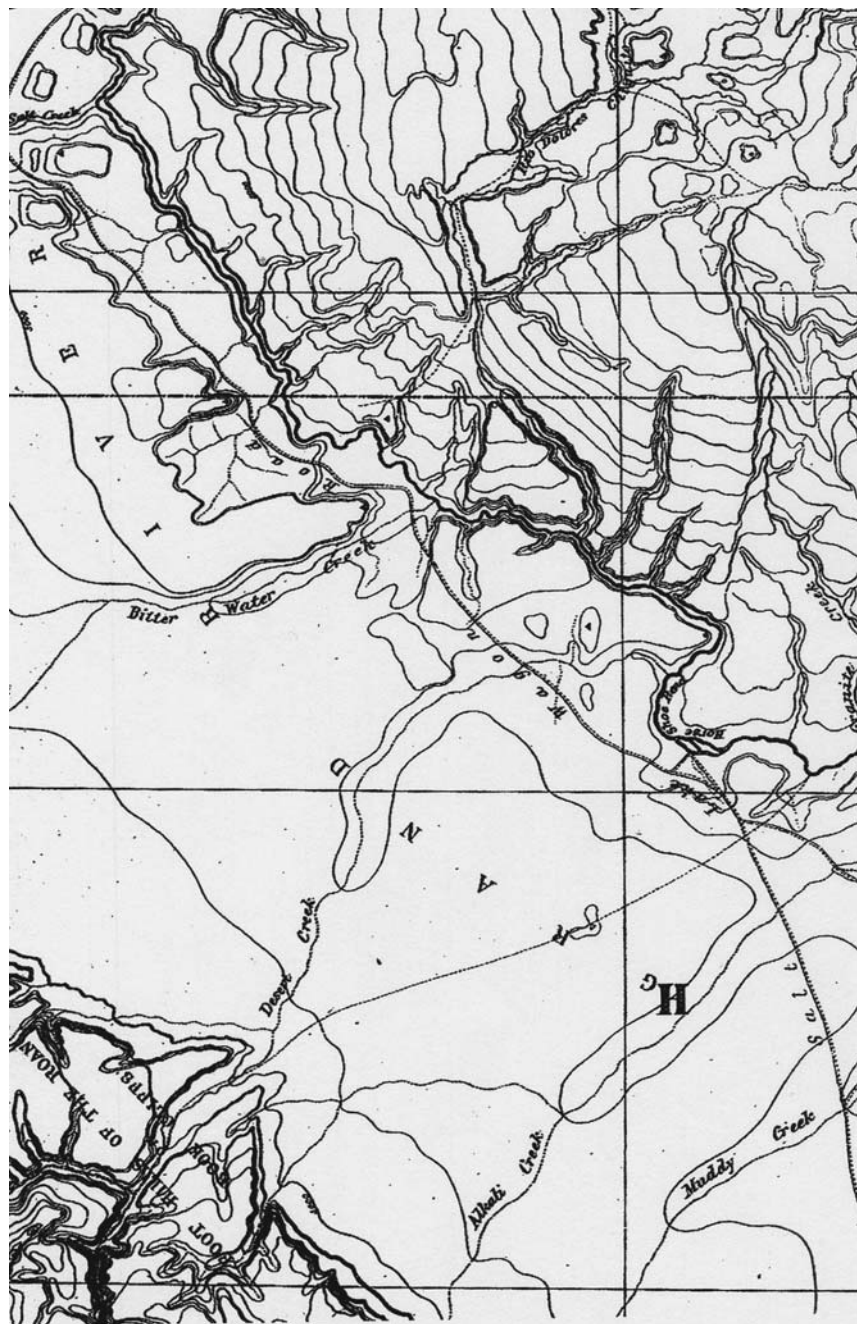
considerably traveled and worked. It was first built by U.S. Troops, many years ago, and has been much used since.”<sup>48</sup>

Colonel William Wing Loring and three hundred military men returning to Fort Union, New Mexico, built the Old Salt Lake Wagon Road. Colonel Loring had come to Utah in the spring of 1858, following a northerly route through Colorado from New Mexico to bring reinforcements to Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston for the conflict between the federal government and Mormon Church that became known as the Utah War.<sup>49</sup> The conflict was settled that spring, though, and on July 19, 1858, Colonel Loring with his men and fifty wagons left Camp Floyd, located west of Utah Lake near Fairfield, Utah, and began a southeasterly trip back to Fort Union. On their return they were apparently assigned to improve existing roads and build their own. They traveled nearly directly south to Ephraim, Utah, headed east to Green River, and eventually reached the Colorado at McGraw Bottom approximately twenty-eight miles downstream from Westwater.<sup>50</sup> They kept a short distance away from the Colorado until they again reached the river’s edge at Cisco and at Westwater.<sup>51</sup> An 1894 survey of Westwater by Frank E. Baxter and a 1911 plat map for the Henrylyn Orchards Colony indicate that part of the Salt Lake Wagon Road appears to be the same well-traveled dirt road that follows the railroad tracks into Westwater put-in today, except that it veers toward Bitter Creek and into Colorado upon reaching the river.

Previously, in 1853 Lieutenant John W. Gunnison and John C. Frémont had conducted separate railroad surveys in the region north of Westwater.<sup>52</sup> However, Westwater seems to have been excluded from surveys in the West until 1875 and 1876, when geologist Ferdinand Vandeveer Hayden extended his Colorado explorations into regions of Utah Territory along the Colorado River.<sup>53</sup> F. V. Hayden was probably the most prominent surveyor during the 1860s and 1870s and gained much of his notoriety both nationally and internationally from his 1871 and 1872 fieldwork in Yellowstone prior to its designation as a national park. Afterwards Hayden turned his attention to Colorado, subsequently surveying the entire state and parts of western territories, including Utah, between 1873 and 1876.

Hayden did not participate directly in all of the survey work but organized teams of specialists to expedite the work. The 1875





Map of Westwater area by Hayden survey, 1875-1876. F. V. Hayden, *Geological and Geographical Atlas of Colorado and Portions of Adjacent Territory* (New York: Julius Bien, Lith., 1877).

Hayden survey crew included Henry Gannett, topographer; Dr. A.C. Peale, geologist; William R. Atkinson, assistant topographer; William S. Holman, barometric observer; L. Dallas, general assistant; four packers; and a cook. Most of their work was done south of the Grand River in the region of the Dolores Triangle and the Sierra La Sal in Utah Territory, which was known to be “infested by a band of troublesome Indians.” During 1875 the party surveyed and made observations of tributaries draining into the Grand River, including Little Dolores Creek. Throughout the region between the Grand and Gunnison Rivers, they seemed impressed by their discovery of “Archean Rocks” and surmised correctly that these metamorphic rocks were extensive. The expedition continued southward to the Abajo, or Blue Mountains, where they were attacked by Indians and abandoned their equipment and samples, including the Archean rocks they had gathered at the Little Dolores. The following year the Hayden explorers returned and surveyed the territory north of the Colorado River going as far west along the river as McGraw Bottom; then they headed north to the Book Cliffs.<sup>54</sup>

A review of the reports of the 1875 and 1876 Hayden surveys suggests that they did not enter Westwater Canyon, which made their information incomplete. Particularly obvious is the contrast between their detailed geologic observations of the Little Dolores Creek and their report of the Grand River, which simply said it had “walls 500 or 600 feet high, presenting bluff faces of massive blood-red sandstones.”<sup>55</sup> Until you hike above the inner gorge at Westwater, you cannot appreciate how deceptive the canyon can be. It is a magnificent and intimidating sight viewed from above the deep blackened gorge. But there are some locations, such as near Big Hole, where from a distance one would never know the canyon exists. I suspect the Hayden party observed Westwater Canyon from a distance. Otherwise it would have mentioned the Archean rock found there as well. When the party returned in 1876 Henry Gannett reported that they “followed the Salt Lake wagon-trail down the Grand River to the mouth of the Dolores, then, leaving the river, we struck north, toward the crest of the Roan or Book Cliffs.”<sup>56</sup> Probably just upstream of mile 143 on Belknap’s *Canyonlands River Guide*, where Salt Creek enters the Colorado River, the survey followed

the road bypassing Ruby and Westwater canyons and reached the river only a few more times near Bitter Creek, Cisco, and eventually McGraw Bottom.

After the mountain men and surveyors, the next visitors to the area were gold-seeking prospectors and outlaws who entered the area to escape the law. Several Grand Junction news items during the late 1880s reported that horse rustlers and train robbers regularly headed in the direction of the Book Cliffs, Westwater, and the infamous Dolores Triangle formed by the Dolores and Colorado Rivers. Newspapers published in the young towns of Moab, Utah, and Grand Junction, Colorado, help piece together some of the wild history of Westwater.

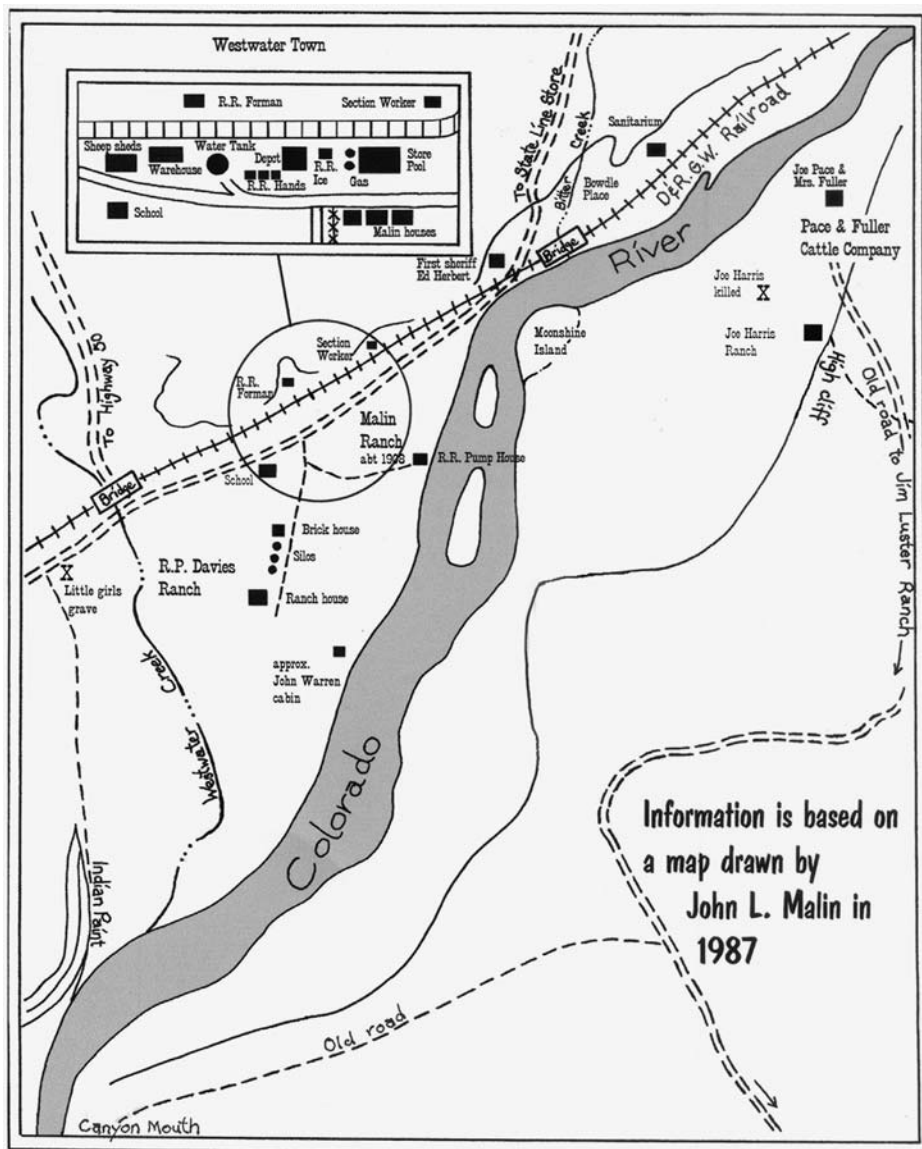


## 2

### Westwater Town

#### A Trip in Time

For three miles the Colorado River runs flat but steady, curving a bit around Westwater Ranch, a private property that runs south from the Westwater launch along the western bank and ends where the river narrows at the granite outcrops. The ranch itself isn't visible from the river, but along the banks old ranch equipment and an irrigation pump can be seen. The river flows lazily past the ranch and then briefly widens as it prepares for an abrupt southerly turn. Ahead, outcrops of granite jut out of the water like gates into another world. This is where the river journey begins. One begins to feel imprisoned by the Wingate sandstone cliffs standing five hundred feet high to the northwest, but on the southeast side there is more open country. Downstream, more clumps of granite are scattered throughout the river and begin to form small walls along the shore. Shortly after entering Westwater Canyon and immediately past the first granite outcrop, to the southeast a small dugout cabin comes into view high enough above the bank not to be affected by high water. The dugout is today the first noticeable sign of early human settlement at Westwater. Wild Horse, or Miner's, Cabin measures fifteen by eighteen feet and is built of rocks and timber against a soil bank, hiding it from any view except that from the river. Archeologist Richard Fike of the BLM, who traveled the





Wild Horse (Miner's) Cabin may have been built by Owen M. Malin shortly after he returned to Westwater in 1918.

canyon in 1973 with veteran river guide Dee Holladay, dated the cabin between the 1890s and late 1920s or early 1930s.<sup>1</sup> During the 1970s many boaters referred to the dugout as “Outlaw Cabin” (not to be confused with Outlaw Cave farther downstream), but no evidence existed that outlaws had used it. Then on April 23, 1978, a BLM ranger interviewed an old-timer from the Westwater area named Owen Malin who claimed that he built the Wild Horse Cabin himself to placer mine.<sup>2</sup>

In the interview Malin gave details of his experiences with placer mining for gold. Owen built a pipe out of roped-together tin



Owen Madox Malin in Moab. Photo courtesy of Ila B. (Malin) Reay.

cans to bring water out of the river and wash river sand and gravel to extract gold.<sup>3</sup> At one time he said the river just below the cabin was dammed up, raising it about four feet higher than it is now. This might be supported by a *Times-Independent* article from July 27, 1922, reporting the Colorado River at the mouth of the canyon had developed a small waterfall over two feet high that affected cattle getting to the river to drink. Ed Herbert and the Malin family reportedly spent one day “blasting out a place in the side of the canyon so that their stock might have access to the water.”<sup>4</sup>

Malin claimed to have built the cabin when he was a boy, shortly after arriving at Westwater. His parents, Elwood Clark and Maggie Bryson Malin, had lived at Westwater when Owen was born on November 22, 1908. Their marriage did not last long, and for the first ten years of Owen’s life he was raised by his grandparents, Commadore Perry and Annie Bryson, in Minidoka, Idaho. It was not until 1918 that Owen came back to Westwater



E. C. and Lula Malin at their Westwater Ranch. The dog's name is Fritz. Photo courtesy of Ila B. (Malin) Reay.

to live with his father and stepmother, Lula Lawrence Malin. Maintenance has been done to preserve the cabin as a historical monument that can be respected by all passing parties. There is no known evidence of the cabin existing before Owen arrived that would dispute his claim, although there was other mining activity along the gravel bars in the upper Westwater region as early as 1884.<sup>5</sup>



The Bryson family lived near Westwater Creek at the turn of the twentieth century. The Brysons ran cattle and broke wild mustangs. Left to right, Les Vanderberg, Pearl Eandy Bryson Vanderberg, Annie Mary Lucas Bryson, Commadore Perry Bryson, Maggie Salome Bryson, Christie Etta Bryson, and George Walter Bryson. A 1900 census lists Maggie as eight years old. Hence, this photograph was probably taken between 1900 and 1902. Maggie was Owen Malin's mother. Photo courtesy of Connie Badayos.

Most of the earliest news regarding the Westwater region involved gold. A potential gold stir was reported in the *Grand Junction News* on January 21, 1893; a Salt Lake City party had staked the entire region around Westwater on the Colorado River near the state line. Some skepticism about the strike existed, and a newspaper reporter admonished his readers to “keep cool” and not to “perpetuate another San Juan fake.”<sup>6</sup> A few weeks later the reporter followed up by investigating the excitement and wrote that his inquiries

lead up to the discovery that the aforesaid prospectors were working on some gold placer claims on the Grand River near Westwater, Utah, just beyond the Mesa County line. It is reported that some very rich





Dee Holladay named these unidentified dugouts above Wild Horse Rapid, Duplex Miners' Cabins. There may have been numerous dugouts and tents in this region in the early 1900s.



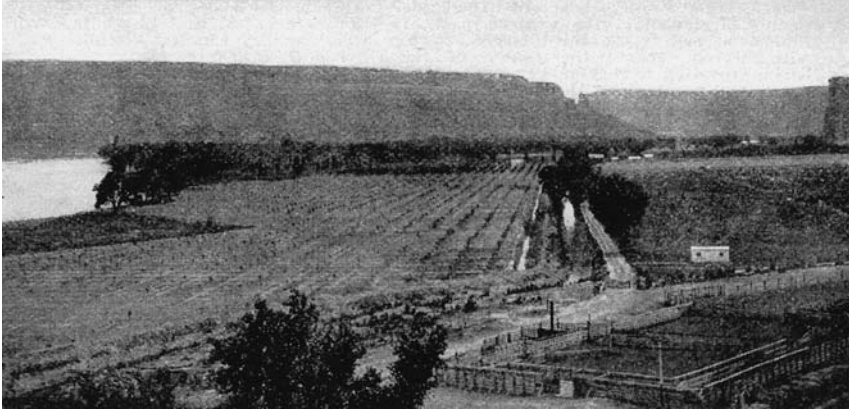


The foundation of the former Westwater school still exists on Westwater Ranch and can be seen on the private property from the road. Photo from the Wilford Hill files courtesy of Elsa Spaulding Hill.



Westwater's economy strongly hinged on the D&RGW Railroad and Westwater Ranch. This view would have included the former railroad town had it survived.





Westwater town site photographed from the railroad tracks by former resident Beatrix Simpson. Photo from *The Railroad Red Book* (1916 and 1917).

dirt has been panned out there lately and hence these mysterious movements. This is not the first time these claims have been prospected, however. Ten years ago they were located by a party of Grand Junctionites, who abandoned them, and only a year ago a party of prospectors from Fruita also gave them some attention. J. Clayton Nichols of this city has also examined them, but does not give a very favorable report of his observations. He says the gold is there but hardly in paying quantities.<sup>7</sup>

There is plenty of evidence at the head of Westwater Canyon of possible mining activity, including the remains of a fireplace at a camp along the sandy beach near Wild Horse Cabin. Further south on the same, eastern side of the river, on the slope parallel to Wild Horse Rapid, are two other dugout cabins that Dee Holladay refers to as the Duplex Miners' Cabins. The dugouts can be seen briefly while running Wild Horse Rapid or can be observed more leisurely during high water. One of the cabins has an unusual-looking, large, spring-type contraption in front of it that is called a rocker and is used to break apart rocks to search for gold or other minerals. I am not aware of any dating of this site, but the rocker does not look very old in comparison to the dugouts.<sup>8</sup> There are several mounds in the vicinity of the Duplex Miners' Cabins, suggesting other buildings or even an entire camp of miners who remained there for some time. Dee Holladay recalls a Model T Ford engine by the riverbank in this area, which may have been used by later miners to pump water to their sluice boxes.<sup>9</sup>



This engine (possibly a special Model A designed for pumping water) was pulled out of the Colorado River near Wild Horse Rapid. Dee Holladay of Holiday River Expeditions reports seeing the old engine for a number of years when there was low water. It was probably used by placer miners who worked the area extensively from the late 1800s through the early 1900s.

Reports of gold in the gravel around Westwater did not cease in 1893. On through the early 1900s, mining outfits came to Westwater searching for gold and established camps along the banks of the Colorado River. Placer mining involves on-site separating of gold flakes from sand or gravel. Presumably, much of this “flower” gold was in the more extensive sand and gravel banks and river bottom above the entrance to Westwater Canyon. The section immediately inside the canyon as far down as Wild Horse, where the water is still placid, clearly was also mined.

From the initial report in 1894 through 1920, when the mining started to diminish, prospectors reiterated the theme that the placer gold in the vicinity of Westwater existed in unusual abundance but that its fineness made it difficult to obtain.<sup>10</sup> They brought many new inventions and technologies into the area between State Line and Cisco in an attempt to procure the precious metal. The gravel and sandbars were worked, reworked, promoted, and regularly sold until approximately 1920. In 1896 the Winn brothers used a primitive rocking operation to claim \$700 worth in gold from a bar over a seven-week period.<sup>11</sup> They worked the Westwater area for a couple of years but by the end of 1898 were reported working claims on the Little Dolores River.

While the Winn brothers were rocking out their living, nearby was the Hattie E. Gold Mining Company, which was formed by J. W. Coustan and O.G. Elkins and controlled 250 acres of land for mining. Prior to establishing a “splendid machinery plant,” they also saw success with rockers, earning \$2,000 within a 150 foot square.<sup>12</sup> In 1897 the company brought in machinery to build the plant, which washed the bars for gold. The following year they employed eight men and ran their plant at full capacity, ordering another pump to assist with washing out the bars. In February 1898 the Hattie E. Gold Mining Company reportedly was entertaining the idea of selling its placer to a Chicago group for \$20,000. Perhaps promoting the sale, Elkins claimed that he “never saw anything in fine gold to equal the Westwater bar.”<sup>13</sup>

In 1898, newspapers predicted a placer mining boom from Westwater down to Moab, with claims being sought all along the Colorado River. In the spring of 1899 a placer dredge that had operated successfully on other rivers was reconstructed at Cisco and “[assured] its success on the Grand River where the bars are



Mickey Thompson, age two, playing in front of the Westwater water tank and the brick treatment plant in 1931. Her father built the merry-go-round/teeter-toter Mickey is playing on. Photo from the Wilford Hill files courtesy of Beryle Marah.

much richer. The demonstration of what the machine will do is most sure to attract capital to put in many other machines.”<sup>14</sup> In the mining news section of the *Grand Valley Times* dated September 7, 1900, the La Sal Mountain Mining District claimed to embrace a strip of land “along the Colorado State line about 20 miles in width and from where the Grand River enters Utah for a distance of more than 100 miles south. The greater part of all this land area is mineral land and is now being prospected and mined by numerous persons who have made substantial and valuable improvements.”

Mining and livestock brought conflict over the legal jurisdiction of land adjacent to the Colorado River when stockmen sought an increase in the grazing land available for leases. This pitted the United States government against the state of Utah.<sup>15</sup> The men running livestock argued that land within the La Sal Mountain Mining District was nonmineral even though it was being mined extensively.

Understandably, residents of the small town developing at Westwater were anxious to get in the mining. Perhaps too late, George H. Darrow in the fall of 1901 expanded his land developing and established the Westwater Land and Mining Company with capital given to him by a party from Lansing, Michigan.<sup>16</sup> Some of the prospectors grew frustrated and moved their machinery to the Little Dolores River, where copper as well as gold was mined.<sup>17</sup> (A copper prospect existed at Little Hole as well.)<sup>18</sup> Still, as late as 1916, Westwater resident Beatrix Simpson wrote enthusiastically: “There is much placer gravel at the mouth of Granite (Westwater) Canyon and its assays have yielded rich returns. Solitary prospectors have realized a generous daily wage by simply panning this gravel, while at present elaborate placer mining machinery is being installed in an endeavor to save the precious metal more rapidly and in greater quantity.”<sup>19</sup> The Westwater gravel bars continually stirred interest until the early 1920s when the miners apparently concluded the gold was too fine and no longer cost-effective to mine.

Jesse Gruver tells a story of a carload of big timbers that tipped over into the Colorado River as the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad traveled through Ruby Canyon: “At a point where there is a big whirlpool in the canyon the poles started

to jam and dig up gravel at that point and it was said to have a lot of gold in the gravel.”<sup>20</sup> No direct evidence supports the story, but there is plenty of evidence that the railroad had difficulties in Ruby Canyon from landslides. They prompted the Denver and Rio Grande in 1927 to move eleven miles of track away from the bluffs and dangerous rolling boulders. Sometime during the early 1920s, deputy sheriff Ed Herbert; his stepson, Elwood C. Malin; and a friend used dynamite to blast an ice jam at the head of Westwater Canyon that was flooding the town of Westwater. As the broken ice gouged the river bottom, it stirred up gravel and, again, some gold was found in it.<sup>21</sup> It did not make them rich, however.

The Westwater gold rush was short lived, and prospectors gradually stopped coming to the area. During the great uranium boom that gripped the Colorado River region in the 1950s, very little was found near Westwater, and the area once again disappointed prospectors.

Cattlemen arrived at Westwater about the same time or not long after the prospectors. The Bar X Cattle Company had a ranch at Westwater as early as April 10, 1889, when Frank Clarence Kendrick and his party of surveyors for the Denver, Colorado Canyon and Pacific Railroad passed through the region on their way from Grand Junction to Green River Crossing.<sup>22</sup> At Green River, Kendrick’s party turned over the survey and their boat, the *Brown Betty*, to railroad president Frank M. Brown and his chief engineer, Robert Brewster Stanton, who intended to complete the survey through the Grand Canyon. The Kendrick party had surveyed all of the Colorado and Green Rivers between Grand Junction and Green River Crossing except for a twelve-mile stretch they portaged around at Westwater Canyon.

The Bar X Cattle Company<sup>23</sup> was spread throughout the valley, using small cabins as shelter for their herders. Homesteaders later inherited the cabins. Upstream from Westwater, near the state line, the surveying party met the first man they had seen in a week at the Murphy Ranch across the Colorado River. So, at least two ranches existed near Westwater in 1889 when Kendrick’s survey crew entered the region. How long the ranches had been there has not been determined. They may have arrived shortly after 1883, when the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad

laid tracks through the region, or closer to 1889, when they could have known the railroad had surveyed the area and would shortly be moving their tracks through the valley, closer to the river, and that a railroad station would be built at Westwater.

If you walk along the dirt road from Westwater Creek to the BLM ranger station today, it may be difficult to imagine that a small town once existed there. Owen Malin's family had a pasture at Westwater where the ranger station is, and their home was about a mile away, next to the dirt road leading to the boat launch. Along the railroad tracks near the bluffs, the foundations of several homes existed until just recently. The foundation of a school still can be seen just over the Westwater Ranch property fence. Names painted on the rocks overlooking the site date back to the early 1900s. Perhaps these are the names of railroad workers. One large rock, which is nearly faded, has the name of Joe Rush in large, well-executed block letters. John Malin said that Joe Rush was a transient artist who painted his name on the rock during a short stay at Westwater. These are the few remnants of the town at Westwater.

The town existed because of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad's need to stop for water and coal to run the trains. A number of small towns popped up during the early railroad years for this purpose. In 1883, when the Denver and Rio Grande was using narrow-gauge tracks and steam-driven engines, there were more than twenty railroad stops between Grand Junction and Salt Lake City. The original "West Water" narrow-gauge line was spiked down from January through March 1883. The line was located farther from the river, near a useless alkali water source on Westwater Creek, until 1890, when the railroad changed to standard-gauge track and relocated it.<sup>24</sup> The narrow-gauge track had followed a path of least resistance that led to numerous curves and slowed the trains down. The standard-gauge track was faster and allowed heavier tonnage than the narrow gauge. Increasing competition and the fact that a standard-gauge track had already been laid from Denver to Grand Junction prompted the decision to complete the line to Salt Lake City.<sup>25</sup>

The decision to replace the narrow-gauge track created an opportunity to relocate the Westwater station nearer to the Colorado River and straighten the line, further improving the



speed of the trains. Other stops in the region included Utaline (State Line), Cottonwood, Agate, and Cisco. Of these, only Cisco is recognized today as once being inhabited. One source claims that during the building of the railroad there were a thousand people, including Asians, and Mexicans, living in the valley and that Westwater was once considered for the county seat.<sup>26</sup> If true, Westwater's large population was short-lived, and Moab instead became the county seat when Grand County was created on March 13, 1890. The 1890 census recorded only 541 occupants in all of Grand County and did not indicate the population of individual town sites.<sup>27</sup>

While the Bar X Cattle Company spread throughout the valley and into part of Ruby Canyon, other small ranchers began settling the area once the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad had laid its standard-gauge tracks nearer to the river. Many of the original Westwater place names came from these early ranchers: Snyder Mesa (southeast of Westwater, across the Colorado River), Grant's Slough (above Bitter Creek along the Colorado River), Bowdle Pasture (also above Bitter Creek but slightly further from the river), the Hallett Pasture (south of Westwater Ranch near Westwater Creek), and May Flat (near the Utah border).<sup>28</sup> Most of the town's original settlers were ranchers and cattlemen who claimed the grass and other vegetation were excellent for winter grazing.

The most stable ranch in the Westwater region was the Pace-Fuller Cattle Company, which was northeast of the current ranger station and across the river. Robert L. and Florence Lorene Harris Fuller arrived at Westwater prior to the turn of the century. Florence probably came into the area about 1895 with her parents, Leroy T. and Nancy V. Harris, who also resided at Westwater for awhile. L. T. Harris died at his home there in the summer of 1915. Nancy was living at Green River, Utah, at the time, so his body was not discovered for a couple of weeks. The Harris and Fuller families were prominent in Grand County and western Colorado. Robert Fuller and his brother-in-law Gilbert A. Harris each served for a time as commissioners of Grand County. In May 1902, Robert died of "inflammation of the bowels," leaving Florence the cattle company. Shortly afterwards she partnered with Joe Pace, a cowboy originally from Texas, to form the Pace-Fuller Cattle Company, which ranged at Westwater during





The Joe Rush inscription overlooks the former Westwater townsite. John L. Malin claims the transient artist stayed for a short time at Westwater. The painting he left then is becoming increasingly indiscernible. Photo from Wilford Hill files courtesy of Elsa Spaulding Hill.



Lorraine Thompson in front of the railroad signal tower and section house at Westwater. Photo courtesy of Beryle Marah.



Westwater water tanks. The railroad tank on the left was replaced in 1928. Photo courtesy of Roberta Knutson.

the winter and at Pinon Mesa in the summer. The company owned more than five thousand acres of land and ran several thousand head of cattle, making it one of the largest outfits in Grand County.

Many of the news items from Westwater mentioned activities of Florence's family or her cattle business. Her daughter, Leola Fuller, was successful in horseback-riding competition each year at the Grand Junction Fair. Leola later married Ross Scarlett, of Grand Junction, and resided near Westwater for a short time. Then on January 30, 1930, the news was of Florence's death from pneumonia. The obituary could not say enough about her accomplishments as a woman of the range. It read in part: "Mrs. Fuller had many friends over both Colorado and Utah who came within the scope of her acquaintance and all knew of her exceptional kindness, her hospitality and her charitability. She was willing to help anyone in trouble at all times as far as her ability would permit. She has been one of the most important figures in the cattle industry for many years, handling her business exactly as a man and working on the range as a man until she had built her business to the point where she no longer had to labor each day."<sup>29</sup> The Pace-Fuller Cattle Company continued to operate, but like the dying town, it no longer provided much news to write about.

Adding to the influx of new ranchers, by the end of June 1891 the railroad had built a section house, bunk house, and

water tank.<sup>30</sup> Westwater received a post office by March 10, 1887, which continued to operate until February 15, 1954.

Westwater Ranch was nearly as central to the success of the town as the railroad was. The ranch has always been one of the largest and most expensive pieces of real estate in Grand County. Smaller ranches originally surrounded the central ranch and were later absorbed into its current acreage. Whatever industry the ranch owners pursued was generally mirrored by the other ranchers. The original industry was cattle, run by the Bar X Cattle Company, but land development, placer mining, fruit trees, sheep, and sugar beets followed. By February 1891 Captain Wilson Ellis Davis had bought the main ranch. He was described as a successful cattleman, but he had lived at Westwater just over a year when he was incarcerated for the shooting of three other Westwater residents near the state border.

In 1893 the Darrow brothers entered the valley and purchased Westwater Ranch. Prior to their arrival there was not much promotion of the land or development of farm sites. The brothers started buying up the land and created a small boom that stirred up friction between some of the older residents and recent homesteaders. Disputing the homesteaders' claims, the ranchers tried to muscle them out. Regardless that they had no prior legal interest in the homesteaders' property, the senior ranchers were now motivated by greed that was stimulated by the land boom.<sup>31</sup>

Originally from New York, George H. and Frank D. Darrow were land speculators who had more recently resided in Colorado. They immediately made an impact on Westwater's economy that lasted for many years. The soil at Westwater was considered excellent for agriculture so their priority was putting it under irrigation. In 1897 the brothers proposed a ditch that would capture water from the Colorado River at State Line and irrigate all of the property along the railroad tracks as far as Westwater Valley.<sup>32</sup> By November 1897 seven miles of the ditch were completed. The following spring they hired twelve men and eight teams to finish it in time for crops. Of the brothers, the *Grand Valley Times* wrote: "These gentlemen have practically built up Westwater and in building this nine miles of ditch credit must be given to Mr. George Darrow for the energetic and determined way he has pushed the work, it would be well for this section



Beryle (age five) and Gerry Thompson (three or four) in front of D&RGW section house in 1933. Photo from Wilford Hill files courtesy of Beryle (Thompson) Marah.

of the country if we had a few more like him.”<sup>33</sup> Shortly after the ditch was completed advertisements promoting the purchase of property followed:

#### Are You Looking For A Home

If so do not fail to investigate Westwater Valley lands. The soil is a fine sandy loam, free from alkali, and has the fertility of river bottom land. A new gravity canal just completed furnishes abundance of water. The finest fruit in the world is grown in the valley along the Grand River. Westwater is on the main line of the Rio Grande Western Railway. Tract adjoining the depot and Grand River can be

had at reasonable prices and convenient terms. Address Darrow Brothers, Westwater, Utah.<sup>34</sup>

The Darrows were also heavily involved with community and county responsibilities, which included each taking a turn as Westwater's postmaster between 1894 and 1900. In 1901 George H. Darrow filed papers to incorporate their business to include mining speculation, establishing the Westwater Land and Mining Company. There are indications the brothers had been struggling for some time to promote and develop the resources at Westwater, and they secured financing from Michigan investors for the new enterprise. Westwater Land and Mining Company maintained title to the ranch property. However, it is unclear whether the Darrows sold their business or whether it was taken over by investors after the brothers moved to Idaho in 1904.

The *Grand Valley Times* of Moab continued to regularly report expectations of great populations at Westwater because of the soil, proximity to the railroad, and the climate. A little more than ten years after the Darrow brothers had purchased Westwater Ranch, it became the property of the Westwater Land and Mining Company. Westwater Land and Mining Company's headquarters was in Lansing, Michigan, and it hired F. S. Johnson as manager over the ranch. Johnson had strong credentials, having served a term as mayor of Lansing and having recently resigned as a member of the Lansing Board of Works to come to Westwater. In the spring of 1905 Johnson planted 4,500 apple trees and eight hundred cherry trees. The company sold five-, ten-, and twenty-acre blocks of land with water rights for \$200 per acre, mostly to people from Michigan.<sup>35</sup>

Westwater soil was extremely conducive for growing fruit, so on November 17, 1906, Alamanzo A. Piatt, the president of the Westwater Land and Mining Company, called a special meeting where the stock holders amended the articles of incorporation to change the company name to Grand Valley Fruit Company. The name would later change again to the Westwater Land and Fruit Company. Although Westwater's agricultural potential was widely recognized, eventually the problem of irrigation caught up with many of the ranch owners. Getting water from the Colorado River presented a problem from the onset, and many attempts to capture the water failed over the long term. From a nine-mile

ditch to water wheels and various pumps, the irrigation of the land proved costly.

In 1909 Theodore C. Henry took his turn and purchased the Westwater Ranch for \$70,000, a considerable amount at the time. He came to the valley with good credentials, having been formerly known in Nebraska as the "Wheat King." His ambition at Westwater was to become the "Alfalfa King."<sup>36</sup> He promoted the site, as others had done, and drew up plans to sell plots of five and ten acres of land in what he called the Henrylyn Orchards Colony. Had it materialized, a road he planned for the Westwater town site was to be named after him. Henry was a good promoter, perhaps too good. Needing irrigation, he talked the residents into voting for \$100,000 worth of bonds by the Grand Valley Irrigation District to erect a gravity ditch that would irrigate 4,000 acres of Westwater land, half of which was his. Instead of enhancing it, the costly bonds hindered Westwater's development.<sup>37</sup> T.C. Henry owned the ranch for a short time. It is unclear if he defaulted, but eight hundred and forty-three acres were sold in 1911 to satisfy a legal settlement.<sup>38</sup>

In the spring of 1916, wealthy businessman William P. Martin Sr. of Realto, California, purchased the Westwater Ranch. In September 1917 he also generously purchased the outstanding Grand Valley Irrigation District bonds and surrendered them back to the district to be cancelled. Unlike Henry, Martin had an interest in the entire town's well being.<sup>39</sup> He probably did more for the economy of Westwater than any ranch owner since the Darrow brothers. Martin intended to use part of the one thousand acres he bought as a "model stock farm," raising registered horses. Unfortunately, not long after the horses arrived at Westwater, two died from pneumonia because of the change in climate. However, Martin remained motivated and had other investments elsewhere, including a producing copper mine in Swansea, Arizona.<sup>40</sup> His enthusiasm and insight seemed to be contagious; when he decided to devote his property to sugar beets, many of the other landowners in the area followed suit.

The Westwater farmers aggressively cultivated their smaller farms for the production of the beets. Throughout the valley news spread of ranchers installing pumps to irrigate their property and prepare it for sugar beets. Owen Malin said that one beet reportedly









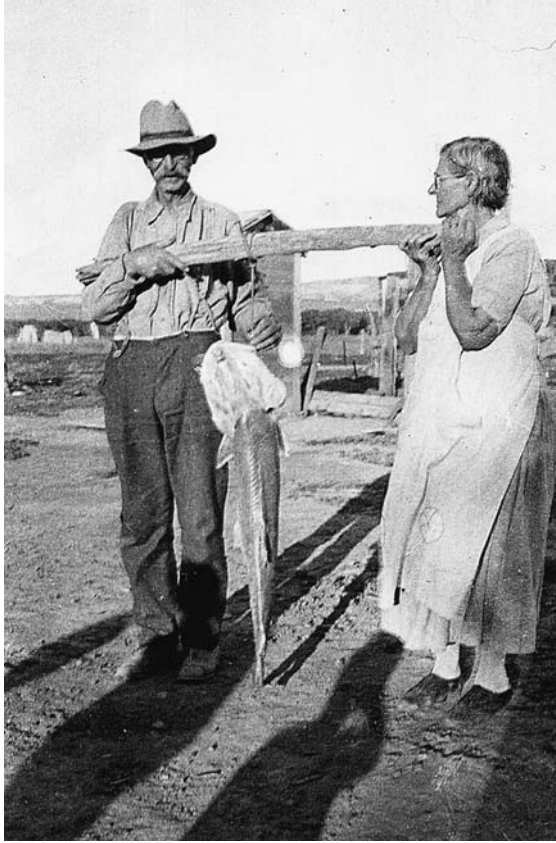
A Westwater building, ca. 1926–1928. Sign on building reads American Railway Exp. Photo courtesy of Roberta Knutson.

weighed thirty-six pounds. Of Martin's decision, Beatrix Simpson of Westwater wrote:

For thirty years, and more, Westwater's fertile acres have lain practically idle and profitless, except for spasmodic attempts at reclamation by speculative irrigation promoters. All the while thousands of acre-feet of water wasted daily passed it's [sic] thirsty soil through the ever abundantly supplied Grand River. Now, however, the valley seems about to come into its own, and years of fullness are predicted in lieu of those so barren in the past.

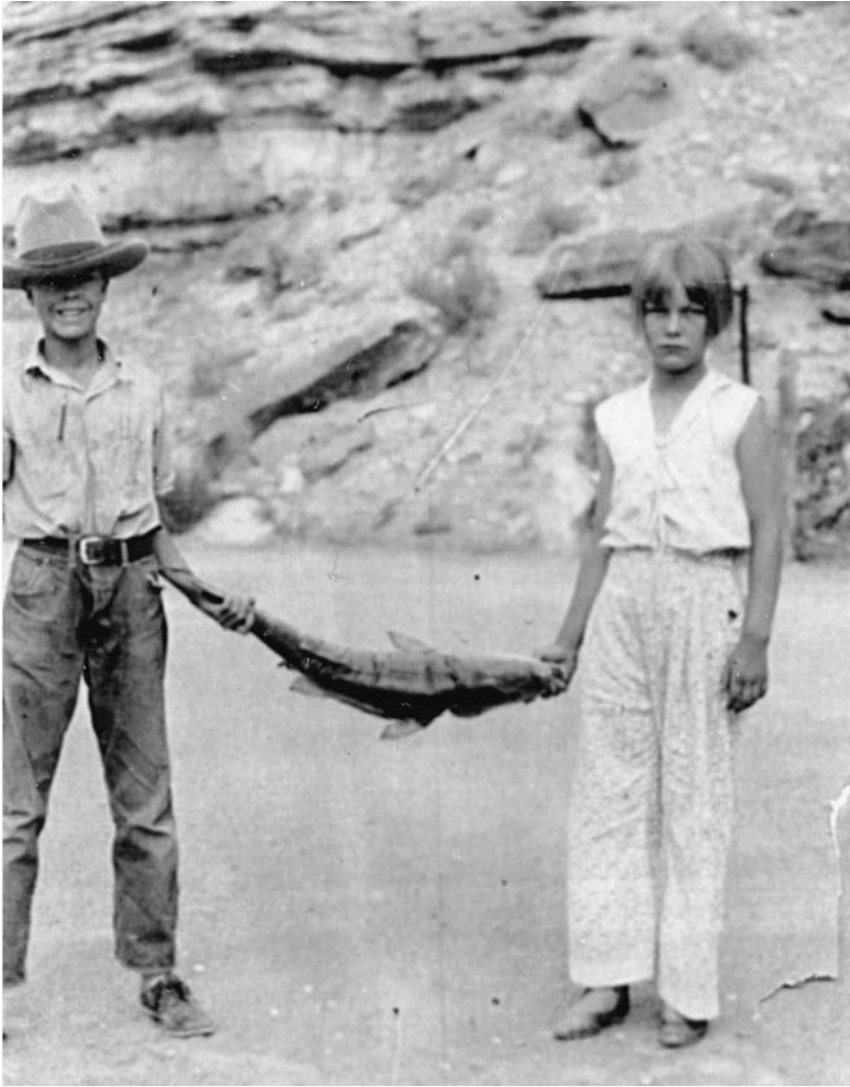
Recent purchasers of eight hundred odd acres in Westwater Valley have installed an engine and pump powerful enough and of a capacity to irrigate such an area and more, and the spring of 1917 is expected to show a large acreage devoted to sugar beet culture and the erection of a beet dump for handling a bumper crop of the sugar-producing root. Experts from the sugar factories who made an examination of the soil and attendant conditions with a view to determine the suitability of this situation for beet culture, pronounced it as possessing a peculiar fitness for that purpose—more so than any location on the Western Slope. In fact, it is authentically stated that a trial crop of sugar beets, made in this valley some years ago, resulted in the almost unbelievable yield of thirty-two tons to the acre. Local people, therefore, feel justified in predicting great things for their valley during the ensuing year.<sup>41</sup>

Interest in sugar beet cultivation escalated in the United States in the wake of World War I when Americans speculated



Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Lawrence with a giant pikeminnow (Colorado squawfish) they caught at Westwater in 1930. The Lawrences were John L. Malin's grandparents. Photo courtesy of John L. Malin.

that the European sugar beet growing areas would require considerable time to recover from the war: "Soon after the outbreak of the war in Europe, sugar prices, like those of many farm commodities, began to rise. If anything, sugar rose faster going from \$4.00 to \$7.25 per 100-pound bag in just a few months and ultimately higher." Eventually, sugar prices reached their peak in mid-1920 at "more than \$25.00 per bag."<sup>42</sup> Throughout Utah acreage dedicated to sugar beets increased dramatically with the onset of the war. In 1916 Utah had 68,000 acres cultivated for sugar beets, this was up from 28,000 in 1905. Acreage dedicated



Jack and Ila Malin with a pikeminnow (Colorado squawfish). Photo courtesy of Ila B. (Malin) Reay.

to sugar beets increased to its highest usage of 113,000 acres in 1920 when Utah farmers were paid an average \$12.03 per ton of beets. By 1930 the total acreage dropped to 44,000, and farmers' prices dropped to seven dollars per ton.<sup>43</sup>

Martin hired contractors to manage his ranch throughout the summer of 1917. However, he was not satisfied with their work, and after dismissing them, he harvested the beets himself. The harvest was successful, shipping forty railroad cars of sugar beets and four cars of tomatoes to Grand Junction. The successful crop can be ascribed to the large pumping plant he imported the previous summer, which included a twenty-five thousand gallon steel tank for a distillate fuel. At least four railroad cars carried the engine, pump, pipe, and a "Giant Semi-diesel" engine.

For the first time, irrigation did not present a problem for the valley, but with successful crops a new problem developed for the Martins— labor. He claimed the Japanese contractors that he first hired and fired did not cultivate the acreage sufficiently, but that left him handicapped by lack of help. To thin, weed, and harvest sugar beets required considerable labor. Smaller farms conceivably could rely on their families for the necessary work, but the larger Westwater Ranch needed considerably more hand labor. The following year Martin hired four Mexican families, who supplied twenty-eight helpers to plant and harvest the crops. He also bought a new harvester that created "quite a bit of interest among the Westwater folks." Although it had been productive, Martin sold his ranch in 1919 "solely because of the difficulty in securing labor and the state of his own health which makes it impractical to remain in this climate." The *Grand Valley Times* reported: "Big Ranch sells for over \$60,000 and is the largest real estate transaction in the history of the county."<sup>44</sup>

The buyers were Herman Tweedy and William B. Allen of Provo, Utah, who expected to run cattle and raise sugar beets on the property. Tweedy and Allen's ownership of Westwater Ranch was short lived, and the property again was sold in 1920 to Fred G. Holmes of the Holly Sugar Company and W. B. Wallace of Grand Junction. The new owners continued to raise sugar beets and shipped thirty-four cars of beets (twenty-five to forty tons per car) to the Holly Sugar Company from their Westwater crop, but they soon let the ranch go as well.<sup>45</sup> Except for the decade-long ownership by the Darrow brothers, the Westwater Ranch seemed



Concrete forms on Westwater Ranch may have once held a 25,000 gallon fuel tank that was needed for a pump W. P. Martin purchased for the ranch in 1916.

like a hot potato, having been praised for its value but not producing enough profit to maintain.

Then, about 1921 or 1922, Robert P. Davie was either assigned the ranch or deeded it; he would farm the land until the early 1930s. The townspeople during that period referred to it as the Davie Ranch. Davie was a former president of the Holly Sugar Company and continued to raise sugar beets until shortly after 1920 when Westwater's sugar beet production stopped. The final word about the Davie Ranch was in 1932, when R. P. Davie intended on "colonizing" the place. When the Westwater Ranch stopped making news, it marked the beginning of the end of the town as well.

The town had a population of ninety-four on the 1920 census, which was about its peak. It had once claimed a much larger temporary population when tracks for the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad were being laid, and Chinese, Mexican, and other immigrant laborers came to the valley. One source claimed there were thirty-five Chinese graves located at Westwater.<sup>46</sup> The 1930 census reported a drop to forty-four residents at Westwater, and the population continued dwindling.

Beginning as a railroad water stop, Westwater was not destined for much more until the Darrow brothers promoted it. Men from the East, primarily Chicago and Michigan, visited the town throughout the 1890s and early 1900s and considered establishing businesses there. A general supply house opened in 1898 during a time when mining and land speculation was at its height. What became of the supply house is not known, but William J. Darrow built a store in 1900. Darrow was also involved in organizing the first school at Westwater, where there were twelve students enrolled in 1898. There was a boarding house near the railroad station run by Chloe Hallett in 1894. Charles and Chloe, with sons Roscoe and Charles Jr., later settled on land near Westwater Creek at the south end of the valley. They eventually ended up near Cisco where the Rose Ranch is located. Besides business, easterners visited the area for health reasons. In 1905 a "large comfortable hotel" was erected at Westwater, primarily housing families from Michigan. John Malin referred to the building as a sanitarium and noted that the climate was ideal for tuberculosis patients. His brother Owen Malin said there were twenty-one rooms in it and confirmed that it was for people with lung problems. The hotel was located about two miles north of town near Bitter Creek and was there until at least 1912. It eventually burned down. Such visits for health problems occurred more often in the winter months when humidity was low, though temperatures would often dive well below zero.

The temperatures would sometimes get as cold as twenty-five to thirty degrees below zero, so that the Colorado River would freeze in the slower parts, and the railroad, store owners, and ranchers would cut ice blocks from it to use during the summer to preserve meats and keep cold drinks and ice cream. Blocks of ice, each measuring about two feet by three feet, were cut using ice saws and transported to an ice house for the railroad, to the store, and to individual ranchers' cellars. John Malin reminisced about having to wade through the snow to the out-house on brisk winter mornings: "it was a touch and go situation. Sometimes we made it; other times no." Ice skating on the Colorado River was not unheard of, and the ice blocks were invaluable. Some years were worse than others. Owen Malin recalled: "I seen it one year where the ice jammed the canyon





This structure built in the side of the hill near the mouth of Bitter Creek was Ed Herbert's garage according to John L. Malin. Photo from Wilford Hill files courtesy of Elsa Spaulding Hill.

down there and backed up until it pushed clear out this field . . . there was three foot of ice shoved out over that field. Just scooped that river out . . . gravel and everything." The river would freeze to a five- or six-foot thickness as far as Little Hole, and the Westwater folks on still, cold winter nights could often hear the ice breaking up, as it "was poppin and crackin down there, just shake the earth." Old-timers say the climate has melted considerably over the past fifty years.

Many of the early ranchers built their homes alongside the Colorado River, and as irrigation methods improved and the use of water pumps increased, they saw the need of moving away from the banks of the Colorado and spreading themselves out. Unfortunately it was too late for some of the earliest settlers. Many saw their homes get washed away by the Colorado River because of their proximity to its bank. Although dependent on the river for water and ice, some of the Westwater town folk avoided it. Only one mile from the river, they would rarely visit its banks, and their only recollections of it were the horror stories they were told. Not all of the stories were fiction; bloated or partially decomposed bodies would periodically be found floating



in the river or along its banks. Individuals drowning at Grand Junction or other locations upstream seemed to wind up at Westwater more often than not. On March 12, 1925, the *Times-Independent* reported:

A tragic mystery was uncovered with the accidental discovery of the body of a well dressed man buried in driftwood in a slough along the Colorado river near Westwater, Utah, yesterday. The only clue to the man's identity is the laundry mark 'H. C. B.' on his collar.

Jesse and Owen Malin, who live on a ranch near Westwater, discovered the body while crossing the slough to catch their saddle horses yesterday. In crossing the drift pile they noticed a pair of shoes sticking up. Upon investigating they found the body.

The man was large and well dressed. No papers of any kind were found in his pockets by which he could be identified. He carried a pair of eyeglasses in their case in his hip pocket. He wore a white pleated shirt and a soft white collar. A watch chain dangled from his vest where the watch was missing and with no other valuables on the body foul play was suspected. Evidently a victim of robbery his body was dumped into the river hoping to forever hide the evidence.

The man was not identified and remained at Westwater where he was buried. At least nine bodies have been buried in a graveyard established by Owen Malin north of Bitter Creek. One body in particular was described as being "a black man over seven feet tall and over 300 pounds. He was so big they buried him sitting up."<sup>47</sup>

Long before river runners were keeping tabs on the Colorado River's fluctuations, ranchers and townspeople all along its course depended on knowing how they would be affected by its flow. During low water the pumps were out and running to guarantee a harvest, while high water did not require pumping. High water created difficulties for cowboys who needed to ford the river to reach town. Living conditions were more difficult when the river overflowed its banks and spread out over the valleys. On June 20, 1918, the *Times-Independent* reported: "The Ed Herbert ranch is entirely submerged by the high water. Ed got high minded and moved up to the second story of his house. He says that for once his ranch is getting a thorough irrigating with no particular damage and only a little inconvenience to himself. Ed makes his regular visits to town via a boat." Ed Herbert had settled in the valley

about 1892. Sometime in late 1917 or early 1918 he moved onto land formerly owned by Ed G. Bowdle near Bitter Creek. One of the few Westwater homes still standing is Herbert's, but it is off limits to visitors since it is on private property.

Others affected by high water included the school children who waded in ankle deep mud for one week during September 1927. When the children were asked to write a poem with water as the theme, one "little fellow" wrote:

We like water in the river.  
We like water in the spout.  
But water round the school house,  
We could get along without.<sup>48</sup>

Schools were a continual concern for residents hoping to make a permanent home at Westwater. The first mention of schools in Westwater was in 1896 when resident Frank D. Darrow was made clerk over school board district two. The twelve children W. J. Darrow, the first teacher, taught in 1898 may have been the biggest class. Not much is recorded about schools in Westwater from 1901 until December 1920, when the local board of education met to secure a school building at Westwater. A decision on the building was deferred though, prompting a Westwater resident to respond with a scathing note in the *Times-Independent*:

Some of the good people of Westwater are wondering whether or not there is any law in Utah regarding the education of children. We have thirteen of school age now, and it would seem that in a state boasting of its rank along educational lines some provision should be made for their schooling. We hear that doubts have been expressed in some quarters as to our really having the thirteen. Well, they are all here, alive and kicking, and will gladly be exhibited to anyone caring to make an investigation.<sup>49</sup>

By September 1922 a location was selected in the rear of Richard Favorel's home, across the road from the Rio Grande Railroad Station. An inconsistent number of school age children, the inability to secure teachers, and the generally poor quality of education forced many parents to send their children to schools in Moab, Cisco, or Grand Junction.

The layout of Westwater centered close to the railroad station. John Malin described the area:

There was a general store—feed store in one building, also a P.O. in the same building, a railroad depot, railroad section houses, about five small buildings, also a pool hall in the general store where they held card games with about 4 slot machines. Also, cow pens and loading sheets for the railroad later on. About 1920 a man by the name of [R.A. Tawney] built a sheep-shearing shed. They could shear about 1,000 head a day. There was a large ranch there, about 150 acres on the south part of the valley belonging to R. P. Davies. There was also a pump house, to supply water to the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad. Also a warehouse complex for grain and supplies for a sheep company belonging to Emmett Elizondo. There was a sanitarium built about 2 miles north of Westwater for the T. B. patients.<sup>50</sup>

Greta Galyean, whose father, Fred, owned the Westwater store from about 1922 to 1929, estimated there were about “twenty-five houses including the store and depot.”<sup>51</sup>

The general supply house George J. Maypole of Chicago established in 1898 likely mostly supplied mining activities in the area. William J. Darrow’s 1900 store that supplied “general merchandise” may have been the one located near the Westwater Ranch until at least 1905, when Louise R. Hess was postmaster for the town. Later the store was located nearer the railroad, probably after Owen L. Simpson established the Westwater Mercantile Company, which operated from approximately 1914 until 1922. Owen and his brother Ben were very enterprising, and under the Cisco Mercantile Company they owned additional property at Little Dolores and Cisco.

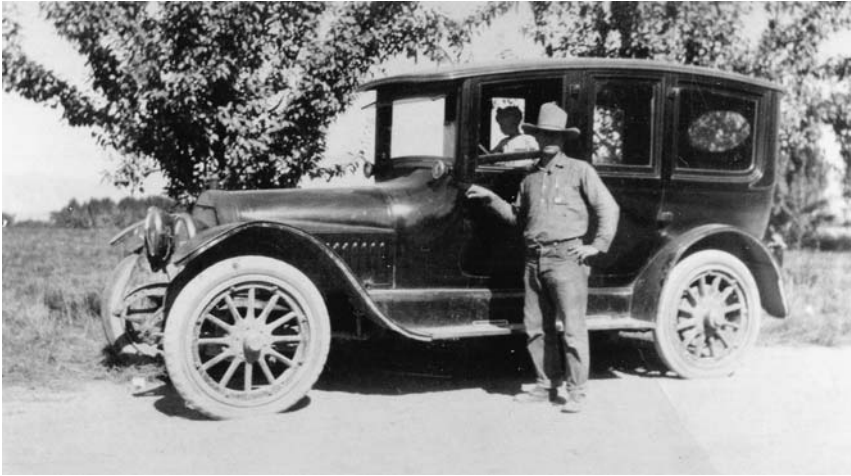
Fred Galyean purchased the Westwater store next. His daughter wrote that he “was from DeBeque, Co.. He was young, had a wife, and new baby. Some sheep people, also from there, told him of the prospects of West Water. Railroad right thru town, easy access to all supplies. So he bought it in his early 20s. It was a general merchandise, Post Office, groceries, barber shop, grain elevator, Ice house and anything else that was needed.”<sup>52</sup> Eventually Fred Galyean felt the environment at Westwater was not conducive to his daughters’ upbringing, what with numerous fights and questionable education, so he sold the Galyean Mercantile Store to J. C. Hardison in 1929. Galyean did not retire



One of the buildings on E. C. Malin's 640-acre ranch, which he left in 1937. Malin owned three different ranches while he resided at Westwater from 1904 to 1937.

from the area, however, and during sheep shearing had a temporary setup at Westwater and Cottonwood stations.

Hardison seemed to be a determined man who lacked foresight. When he purchased the store, Westwater was entering a decline from which it would not recover. Joe Ocomico purchased the Tawney Shearing Plant in 1932 and later moved it to Cisco. It was reported that year that no shearing would occur at Westwater. Hardison's son, J. W., responded that the news reports were incorrect and that the Westwater Blade Shearing Plant would indeed operate. In an almost desperate plea, he advertised, "We have already booked numerous herds and are in a position to care for your shearing needs. Write or phone us as to the date you want, and we will do our best to accommodate you. Work is guaranteed to your satisfaction. Prices will be no greater if as much as at the other plants. Feed is starting nicely at Westwater, there will be plenty of water, and altogether we believe you can do no better than use our plant."<sup>53</sup> Sheep traveling between Colorado and Utah was an important source of income to the



E. C. Malin with son Jack (John L. Malin) in 1918 Cadillac 4-door Brougham, at Westwater. Photo courtesy of John L. Malin.

store at Westwater, so it was vital that the Hardisons compete for the shearing business.

At some point Hardison may have defaulted on his purchase of the Galyean Mercantile Store because in May 1932 he was reportedly building a store across from it. Another man from Fruita, Colorado, was considering purchasing the existing store and running the post office from it. It was inconceivable that two stores could coexist at Westwater at that time. That month Hardison also bought property in Cisco with the intent to build a grocery store there. Then he moved the “old filling station” in Westwater to Mack, Colorado, and replaced it with a new one. Within the next five years the advantages for having a store at Westwater would fade, but John Coleman Hardison remained at Westwater and died there in 1943.<sup>54</sup>

Recreational social activities in town included fairly regular dances that, at times, were attended by as many as thirty couples. Invitations were extended to Cisco residents, announcing that ice cream, cake, coffee, cocoa, and ice tea would be served. Even during prohibition a few other drinks were served, off the record of course. Ed Herbert often acted as caller, and a small orchestra, radio, or phonograph provided the music. A non-denominational Sunday school was started in 1927, meeting in the

schoolhouse for at least a couple of years. During the summer the vicinity of the ranger station and Bitter Creek became popular picnic sites. Other than ice-skating in the winter, there was no other recorded recreation on the Colorado River. Of the town's swimming hole, a Westwater correspondent wrote: "The swimming pool in Bitter Creek is getting to be quite a popular resort [with] this hot weather. Some very nifty bathing suits are in evidence, too, but then there isn't any censor, so we wear, or fail to wear, what we please."<sup>55</sup> Other activities included hiking and investigating the back country. In 1927 Harlow McHenry, Bryan Arant, and Carlos Dahling hiked the canyons looking for Indian ruins. They reported they "had quite an enjoyable trip going down, but say that it was at least twice as far coming back, and that the cliff dwellers had inconsiderately left no traces of their existence in that particular location."<sup>56</sup>

Hunting was enjoyed by both sexes. About the only location in the area considered successful for deer hunting was across the river at Star Canyon. While the men hunted deer, the women more frequently hunted rabbits. Of one such outing it was reported that Fred Hall, Sr., the pumper for the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, and his son Henry

forded the river very early one morning, armed to the teeth and with blood in their eyes, each determined to enact the role of "Deerslayer" and bring home the bacon, as it were. Not far from dusk, however, they returned with lagging steps and most uncommunicative as to their expedition. Those of us who had confidently expected to add venison to the next day's menu, were forced to the conclusion that the huntsmen either experienced "buck fever" at the crucial moment, or that their [com]plaint of not meeting so much as a deer track is true and that in reality "there ain't no such animal" in these parts. They did see numbers of Joe Pace's cattle, rolling fat from summer range on Pinon Mesa, and say they were sorely tempted to bring home some regular meat; but discretion prevailed, and the Pace-Fuller herds are still intact.<sup>57</sup>

Another hunter had a more difficult time while hunting in the canyons across the river. Bob Tappin, in 1922, became lost while trying to find his way back across a cliff. Testing the ledges for a way down he ended up falling a considerable distance. The fall rendered him unconscious for a few hours. Awakening, he

began wandering around until dark, when he dug out a burrow with his bare hands to sleep in, covering himself with bark. Without food he the next day again wandered until dark, when he saw a light across the river on the Davie Ranch. With his new rifle in hand he started to swim across. About midstream he could no longer hold on to the rifle and lost it to the river. He managed to make it to the other side where a Mexican camp was located, and eventually he received the necessary help from Mrs. Florence Fuller.<sup>58</sup>

For a number of years government trappers were stationed at Westwater. Their primary job was to exterminate predatory animals, including wolves, coyotes, and mountain lions, that attacked livestock in the area. Wolves and mountain lions in particular were a threat to the area's cattle. In 1913 Joe Pace of the Pace-Fuller Cattle Company had a problem with a wolf that was killing his cattle on their summer range at Pinon Mesa. He tracked the wolf for twenty-five miles up Jones Gulch across the river from Westwater, where he shot and killed the six-foot-long animal.<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps because cowboys didn't have time to hunt the predators, the government trappers were assigned to Westwater a few years later. One such trapper was Hymie J. Turner, who arrived in Westwater with his family in the winter of 1922. His initial emphasis was trapping coyotes. However, his residency only lasted about three months because his nine-year-old son, Herman, tripped while carrying a gasoline can. The spilled gas landed on their stove and exploded, destroying the house and burning the boy badly. Other trappers followed, and in 1924 E. R. Dalton of Westwater was crowned "Champion Trapper of Mountain Lions." To win the title, Dalton brought in four large pelts of mountain lions he trapped across the river on the Pace-Fuller cattle range. The cats were inflicting heavy losses to the cattle in the region. Only a handful of trappers ventured into Westwater Canyon. During the winter of 1927, H. H. Turner, a government trapper from Moab, and Elwood Malin were fined for illegally trapping beaver in the canyon. Also, trapper brothers John and Parley Galloway made at least one pass through the canyon trapping beaver.

Although bears existed in the vicinity, they are not known to have caused any problems for ranchers. On one particular occasion in September 1922, a bear was sighted near Westwater.





Norval, Jack, Ila, Betty, and May Malin. The nearest building on the right is the Lawrence's home. Left of it are the saloon, pool house, post office (white), section house, and a small railroad ice house. Photo courtesy of Ila B. Reay.

Elwood Malin located the “bruin on the Davie Ranch, across the wash. He lassoed the bear, and managed to lead him more than halfway home. The bruin put up such a fight that Mr. Malin had to shoot him, and carried the carcass the rest of the way across his saddle.”<sup>60</sup>

The town of Westwater's prime years were between about 1900 and 1925. It was at that time a community of families that included Malin, May, Harris, Simpson, Dahling, and Fuller. Although the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad made frequent changes in personnel, many employees spent numerous years at Westwater and invited their relatives to spend significant time with them working and vacationing there. Frank “Dad” Hall ran the railroad pump at Westwater. His wife, Polly, was affectionately called “Mommie” by area residents. John D. Pearson ran the Westwater pumping plant and was referred to as “Uncle.”



Beryle Thompson, age five, in front of her home at Westwater in the early 1930s. Photo from Wilford Hill files courtesy of Beryle (Thompson) Marah.

Charlie Salatino was section foreman for a number of years as well. Perhaps working and living at Westwater during its heyday was best remembered by J. G. Imhoff, who came there in 1907 as a telegraph operator for the railroad. When he retired in 1925 he said, "In my fifty years of railroading there was no place so hard to leave as Westwater".<sup>61</sup>

Westwater residents realized that they could not always depend on the railroad. In their continuing struggle for survival, the residents needed good roads. As early as 1897 the idea of building a river road to bring more business to Westwater was being explored. There had been wagon roads near the railroad

tracks, but they needed considerable improvement. At times they were impassable. The *Times-Independent* reported on May 23, 1918:

What has become of the Grand county commissioners, are they still in the land of the living? If so, why don't they try to come to Westwater over the wagon road. There is a chance that they would never be able to survive the trip. One man started for this place last week with a team and wagon, he first lost his wagon, then his team, and finally arrived in town on foot. A rescue party from here went out and succeeded in finding the lost articles, and started him on his journey toward Mack, Colorado. A cordial invitation was extended to the visitor to call again, just what he said in answer we could not make out, but it sounded to the writer as though he was not very enthusiastic over the idea.

A few weeks later Will May traveled to Westwater to visit relatives at Echo Ranch on May Flats. When asked his opinion of the roads, he replied that "he had not found it yet." His trip ended when his car had to be pulled out of deep sand by two horses.

Roads were the brunt of many jokes during succeeding years. During the summer of 1920 grading commenced to establish a "real road" that would replace what had been merely a set of wagon tracks from Cisco to Grand Junction. Many of the residents of Westwater took turns assisting with the road work, which was initiated by Mesa County in Colorado. They were particularly interested, though in the development of the Midland Trail road proposed to follow the former narrow-gauge railroad and create a shorter distance between Moab and Grand Junction. Westwater residents lobbied heavily to persuade the Mesa County commissioners to take this road through Westwater. Edward Herbert suggested the following:

[The road will follow] the Midland Trail beyond Mack to Bitter creek from there the road turns down Bitter Creek canon, following it the entire distance to Westwater, thus eliminating some 10 miles of travel, all of which is across the desert. Another advantage of the road is that it follows quite closely the line of the D&RG and water is available along much of the distance. The Utah road officials have already completed the new road from Cisco to Westwater, and are now at work to the east from that point. The road on Bitter Creek will be a fine auto highway, and one of the best links to the Midland Trail. It



These foundations of houses at Westwater have been destroyed since this photo was taken in 1981. Photo from Wilford Hill files courtesy of Elsa Spaulding Hill.



Former site of Westwater town next to railroad tracks. Concrete blocks in the distance formerly supported the railroad water tank. They have recently been removed or buried.

will shorten the distance between this city [Grand Junction] and Westwater by 10 miles or more and will there connect with the river route into Moab now being constructed, which will shorten the distance to Moab by a total of 20 miles. Mesa County will have but little new road to construct and that will be across an open park where the cost will be small.<sup>62</sup>

Although they were excited about the roads being graded from Cisco to the state line, Westwater residents were more anxious for Mesa County to connect the primary road from Colorado with the Midland Trail highway by passing through Westwater. The proposed route would travel east from Cisco, run parallel to Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad tracks to Westwater and then to a natural rock bridge across Bitter Creek, and then follow that canyon to a location near the Colorado border. By April 28, 1921, the decision had not been made. At this time a Westwater correspondent wrote, "it is hoped that work on the Colorado end will soon commence so that tourists and others who are anxious to drive across country via this excellent and abbreviated route may soon do so."

In 1922 Elwood Malin reported that Westwater residents had worked on the road, and it was in "first class" condition. The work crew also put up signs to direct travelers to "springs and water holes near the road" between Westwater and the Colorado border. With little control over the outcome, Westwater residents watched as the debates continued regarding the route that the Midland Trail, now being called the Pikes Peak Highway, should follow. The commissioners investigating the routes said "that the Westwater route is by far the most practical, will cost less to construct and the maintenance expense will be much less than on the old road. A car can now negotiate the road with less difficulty than is encountered on the upper road, due to the many bad crossings on the latter highway. The people of Westwater have done considerable work on the road up Bitter Creek canyon, and as a result the lower route is even now the best road to the state line."<sup>63</sup> Apparently though Westwater was not selected. The *Times-Independent* reported that the survey decided that the highway should not have any railroad crossings.

In 1927 a petition from Cisco and Westwater was submitted favoring construction of a road between the two towns. The petition

was rejected on the grounds that no additional road construction would be done until the state road was completed. The road supervisors were, however, given instructions to maintain the existing dirt road. But desperation continued for a road through Westwater. In 1929 the town's correspondent wrote, "If the people only knew about our road through Westwater, and Colorado would do a little work on their eight miles on the east end, this route would be much better than getting stuck in the bad washes on the highway. Our washes are never boggy."<sup>64</sup> She continued: "We are very desirous of having the main highway run through Westwater, and can offer some excellent scenery, splendid camping locations, markets for groceries, gas and oil stations. The route through Westwater is much better than the direct route across the desert to Cisco, where the traveler is miles away from aid in case of accident or motor trouble."<sup>65</sup>

Then the little town lost support for even maintaining its existing roads, in particular the road to Grand Junction. Discouraged to hear they could not secure a primary road, residents pled with Colorado to at least maintain an eight-mile stretch from the state line, reminding Coloradans that Westwater residents spent a considerable amount of money there and some also paid taxes. Then, during the summer of 1930 the crossing at Bitter Creek collapsed, and the town folk were unable to repair the damage to their county road to the state line. The road was closed and a notice posted that "no further attempt will be made by the county to keep it in repair."<sup>66</sup>

Throughout the 1920s Westwater had focused on obtaining a highway through their town. As the decade came to a close, so did their hopes. Other signs of a depressed economy included the disappearance of the sugar beet market that had been so highly touted at the beginning of that decade. Sheep shearing moved primarily to Cisco and Thompson, and all that remained in Westwater were the ranchers and their dying hopes. J. C. Hardison's purchase of the mercantile store in 1929 and attempt to revive sheep shearing's heydays were among the last failures.

Westwater was of course not the only rural town affected by an economic downturn during the 1920s and 1930s. The decade that began as the roaring twenties soon brought signs of trouble throughout rural Utah. It culminated in the Great Depression

that was preceded by the 1929 stock market crash. However, Utah agriculture was depressed long before the stock market crash. Falling prices resulted from lowered demand and other unforeseen conditions that “included soil deficiency, plant regression, insect pests, drought and erosion.”<sup>67</sup> After “Utah harvested its largest acreage of crops ever in 1922 and its greatest yield per acre in 1925,” its production spiraled downward until the 1930s, when extreme drought conditions, depressed prices, and the increased costs of maintaining farms drove many farmers from their lands or into bankruptcy.<sup>68</sup>

Westwater had been one of the stronger agricultural areas in Grand County because the Colorado River provided necessary irrigation. But even the Colorado River worked against the locals, as it reached extreme low water levels. On August 26, 1931, it measured 885 cubic feet per second (cfs), and on June 21, 1934, it trickled by at 640 cfs. The high water level during those years reached 17,400 and 16,800 cfs respectively.<sup>69</sup> Leonard J. Arrington wrote of the great drought of 1934:

The climatological data tell us that never before in United States history had so little rain fallen over so wide a territory during an entire growing season as in 1934. Moreover, according to U.S. Weather Bureau reports, although most dry years are preceded by years of adequate rainfall, this was not true in 1934, for the preceding four years were abnormally dry in many parts of the country. The year June 1933 to May 1934 was the driest on record in most midwestern and Great Plains states (Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, and the Dakotas), and the seasonal snowfall in California, Colorado, and Utah was about half of normal and in Wyoming about one-third of normal.<sup>70</sup>

Westwater had prided itself on its sugar beet production. After the success Westwater Ranch experienced shortly after World War I, many of the smaller farmers in the area excitedly followed suit in planting sugar beets. Their decision was reinforced when members of the Holly Sugar Company became frequent visitors to Westwater and eventually owned some of the land. One thing that may have eventually hurt their crops was the beet leafhopper, an insect pest that “induced curly top disease in sugar beets, beans, and tomatoes.” Also, reports indicate there may not have been any crop rotations, and thus the soil



was depleted. Perhaps the biggest burden for the farmers to bear was that during the Depression the trains became too expensive to ship their produce.

Harvey Edward Herbert died on May 8, 1929. Herbert had been a colorful resident of Westwater since about 1898 and was central to its history. He had held positions such as state sheep inspector, deputy sheriff, caller at dances, road repairer, rancher, and assistant to Ellsworth Kolb's and Bert Loper's historic river trip through Westwater Canyon. As the new decade approached there was little indication that Westwater even stood a chance. With no outside support its advantages began to diminish. Advances in locomotive train engines made frequent stops for water and coal no longer necessary. Like dominoes falling, railroad stations were closed. Westwater seemed to sense its end coming. Many of the long-time residents started looking elsewhere to live. A town that established itself because of the railroad was now being extinguished by it. The railroad station at Westwater, Grand County, was officially abandoned on May 5, 1931.<sup>71</sup>

According to John Malin, the railroad continued to stop for livestock through most of the 1930s, but the large portion of the town's central population that consisted of railroad personnel moved. A store and gas station remained open for a number of years, until people stopped coming. The post office survived until it was closed on February 15, 1954. Its receipts during 1952 totaled \$62.19 while the cost for maintaining it exceeded \$504.40.<sup>72</sup> The departure of the post office finally extinguished the once lively town of Westwater.

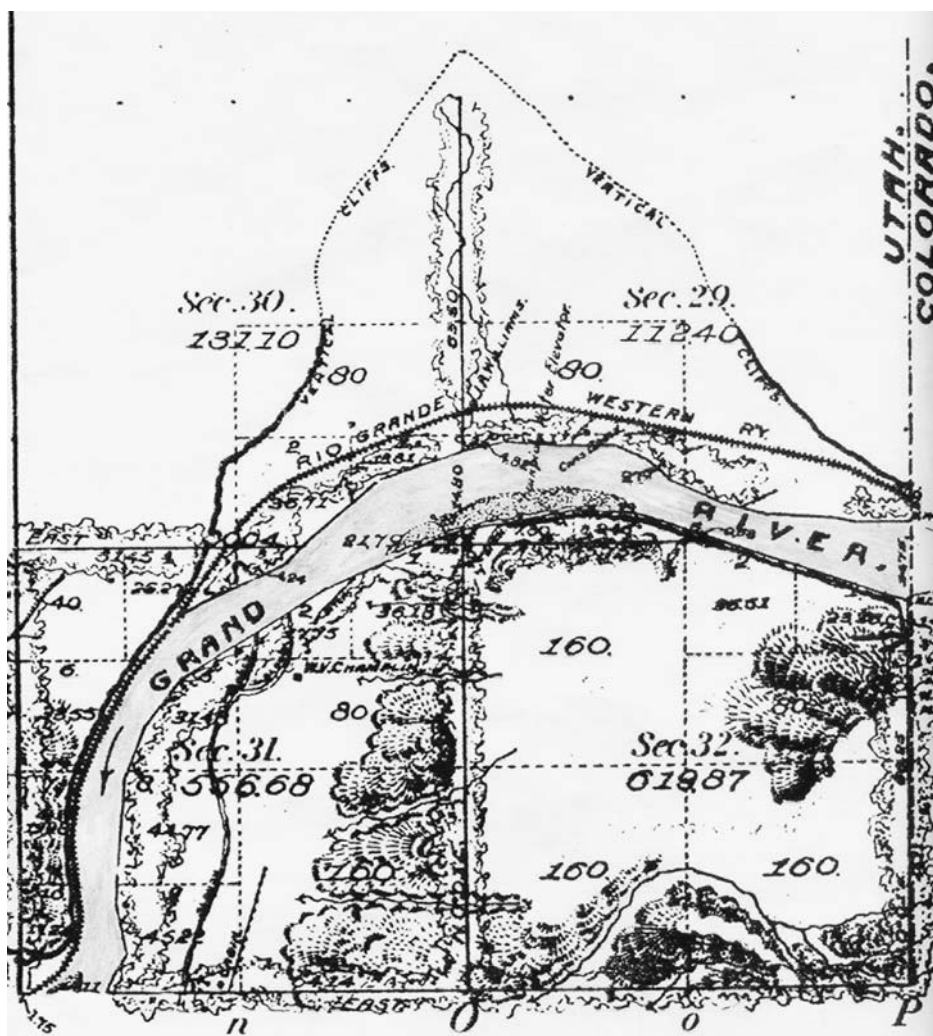
### 3

## Gunslingers and Bad Guys

Even before the railroad arrived in 1883, there was activity around Westwater. Horse thieves and cattle rustlers often traveled the area between Utah and Colorado to escape the law. Without a large posse, it was nearly impossible to find anyone hiding in the canyons along the border. Some outlaws would hole up in the Dolores Triangle; others traveled to the Book Cliffs along the Wild Bunch trails. The Dolores Triangle is a remote desert region that is enclosed by the Colorado and Dolores Rivers and the Utah border. During spring runoff it is nearly inaccessible except from Colorado. In 1889 the *Grand Junction News* described the region.

The Mountains of eastern Utah are especially wild and desolate and afford the best kind of hiding places for outlaws. In fact it is pretty generally supposed that there is a regularly organized band of horse and cattle thieves who plunder the country for hundreds of miles around and secrete their stolen property in this rendezvous and from thence drive them through the mountain wilderness to Arizona and there dispose of them.<sup>1</sup>

With growth came adversity, and Westwater, within a couple of years of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad moving its tracks nearer the Colorado River, was labeled a lawless town. The *Salt Lake Herald* headlined a preliminary murder trial of Westwater resident Captain Wilson Ellis Davis in 1892 by blasting Westwater, stating, "The Indians left there over ten years ago—yet the law of violence which they were wont to practice



Survey map, 1894, showing the location of "Chas Brock" cabin, just below "Western" along railroad. Survey and Township Map for T. 19 S., R. 26 E., BLM Information Access Center, Salt Lake City, Utah.

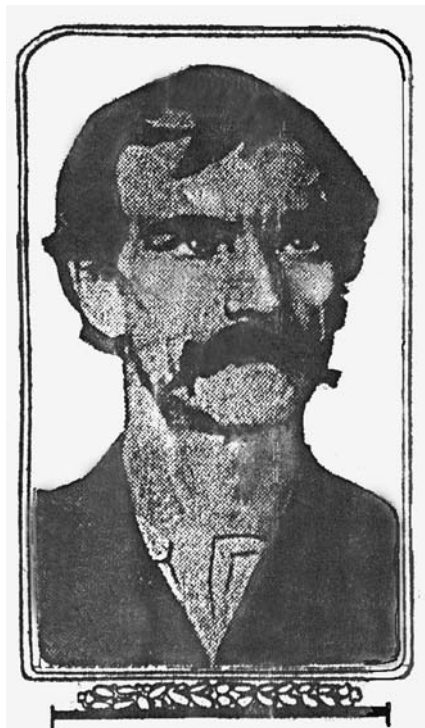
under seems to have remained and the white settlers who are possessing the country have been disturbed with not infrequent eruptions in the way of bloodshed.”<sup>2</sup>

### Captain Wilson Ellis Davis

The incident that led to the preceding headline began on August 23, 1892, when Captain Davis returned to his ranch at Westwater after visiting with relatives in Grand Junction, Colorado. He was at the time about fifty-three years old. Physically imposing, he stood 5' 11" and had dark hair, dark eyes, and a heavy mustache. He had a slight handicap, generally imperceptible, as a result of being shot in both hips during the Civil War when he was a sharpshooter for the Union Army. Davis had entered the army as a private in 1860 and by the end of the Civil War had advanced to captain. He became interested in property in the vicinity of Westwater as early as 1890, when he attempted to buy Charles C. Brock's ranch near the border. Two years later he was a successful rancher who with his wife, Hessie, had moved onto Westwater Ranch the prior year, in February. Upon his return home from Colorado, Captain Davis discovered fence posts near his haystacks were charred, in what he suspected was an attempt to burn him out, and honey had been stolen from his beehives. He immediately suspected he knew who had done it and began to investigate.

Following a trail of spilled honey that led to the railroad station northeast of his home, then along the tracks and wagon road, he continued toward the Colorado state border. Shortly past Bitter Creek he stopped at George D. Grant's ranch, where he met George's son Frank Grant and inquired whether he had seen anyone along the tracks with his stolen honey. The Grants were likely some of the original settlers around Westwater, having established a ranch northeast of Bitter Creek along the Colorado River in 1889. Young Frank Grant had not noticed anything but voluntarily joined the investigation by riding Captain Davis's horse to near Charles Brock's cabin to spy on him and confirm whether the honey led in that direction. It was not the first time Captain Davis had had trouble with Brock.

Charles C. Brock lived about a half-mile west of the Colorado border in the vicinity of May Flats. He had a single-room log cabin



Captain Wilson Ellis Davis in approximately 1892, when he shot and killed the Brock Gang at Westwater. This portrait appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on February 2, 1914, when he was being tried for another murder.

near the Colorado River. It was described as more like a den, being half cabin and half dugout built partially into a bluff and having an earthen roof and floor. A single door faced north, away from the river, between a north-facing window and another one on the side of the dugout facing east. Bars made from railroad bolts substituted for glass in the windows, and a stack of timber standing about four to five feet high and about twelve feet long in front of the door prompted Davis to refer to it as a “fort.”<sup>3</sup>

From the railroad tracks the cabin was mostly invisible with only about a foot of the eaves showing. Brock had been living alone until a few days earlier when Charles A. Dussel and William Mueller moved in. They had worked for Captain Davis most of the summer doing odd jobs around his ranch until they were fired on August 19, just prior to Davis’s visit to Grand Junction. Brock,



Area where Charles Brock's dugout, built between 1890 and 1892, was once located. Brock and his two gang members were buried near the dugout after being killed by Captain Wilson Ellis Davis on August 24, 1892.

Dussel, and Mueller were all German and spoke the language among themselves. Brock claimed about 320 acres near his home.

In 1892 Brock was about forty years old and somewhat stocky, standing about 5' 6", and had sandy hair and a mustache. He was probably the boatman for Frank Clarence Kendrick in 1889 and thus learned about Westwater from the Colorado River while he was with the Denver, Colorado Canyon and Pacific Railroad Survey, better known as the Brown-Stanton Survey. The survey was to follow the Grand (Colorado) River to its confluence with the Green River, then continue to the coast through the Grand Canyon. Kendrick began his work in Grand Junction, Colorado, on March 28, 1889 and was responsible for the survey to the confluence. While in Grand Junction he hired Charles Brock as his boatman and two other residents, Frank Knox and George Cost, to assist with the survey. Kendrick's journal indicates Brock was spirited and fearless. His note for Wednesday, April 10, 1889, read: "Ran line down through Box X ranch to Sta 2207 at mouth of 'Hades Canon' [Westwater Canyon] where the

woman was drowned . . . Brock came near going over the rapids & we had to tow him back. This is a very fine valley.”<sup>4</sup>

A carpenter by trade, Brock helped build Captain Davis’s beehives and did home repairs for him. By 1890 Brock had claimed land near Westwater. Not much was known about him prior to his move to Grand Junction a few years earlier except that he was a widower before he arrived and he had a daughter who was not living with him. Around Grand Junction he was described as a pretty decent man until about 1890 when he got in trouble with the law regarding some cattle rustling and spent time in jail at Grand Junction. Probably around the same time he was sentenced with his “gang” to six months of jail time at Moab. Since there was no jail in Moab, they spent their time in the Darrow Hotel under the watchful eye of Sheriff Richard Dallin Westwood.<sup>5</sup>

It was while Brock was in jail at Grand Junction that Captain Davis became acquainted with him. In December 1890 Davis approached Brock with a proposal to buy his property near the Utah state line. Although no purchase agreement was reached, Davis arranged to care for the property until Brock was released and then discuss buying it again. The sale was never consummated, though, and Captain Davis in February 1891 moved further south to Westwater.

Although Davis and Brock were neighbors and had helped one another for a couple of years, there was bad blood brewing between them. Not long before the stolen honey incident, Davis had approached Brock’s cabin and discovered a quarter of beef hanging there that, judging from a cowhide, was his. Brock was not in at the time, so Davis told William Mueller to relay a message that he wouldn’t stand for stealing and Brock had better stop it. Unbeknownst to Davis, Brock had stolen other ranch equipment from him that wasn’t discovered until later.

In the spring of 1892, Captain Davis hired William Mueller.<sup>6</sup> He had come from Grand Junction, where he was considered a very peaceable and quiet citizen. The tallest of the three later living at Brock’s cabin, he was described as having a medium build and black hair and eyes. The third gang member, Charles A. Dussel,<sup>7</sup> was dark complexioned, mustachioed, short, heavy, and about twenty-five years old. Not much was known about him



prior to his arrival at Westwater in early July 1892, when he became acquainted with Davis, who hired him.

Brock, Mueller, and Dussel complained about and cursed Davis, boasting of various ways they would ultimately kill him and feed him to the Grand (Colorado) River. Davis was not aware of their threats, but he was aware of a growing animosity, apparently brought to fruition by their attempt to burn his ranch. Something had to be done about them, something had to be said.

Not being discovered, Frank Grant returned from spying and reported that the honey trail led to Brock's cabin. Davis returned home briefly for dinner and to get a couple of horses. Uncertain how to approach the gang, he and Grant went to the bluffs above May Flats, where Davis spied on the Brock place through field glasses from a distance of about three or four miles away. After watching the cabin for a little over an hour, he decided to get closer. He and Grant cautiously rode their horses toward the cabin; stopping about a quarter mile away from it, they waited. Shortly, they heard a wagon making its way to the cabin. Still unnoticed, they crossed the railroad tracks and rode parallel to them about a hundred yards past the Brock place, where they remained unobserved, waiting to see what Brock was doing with the wagon. Faintly audible to Davis and Grant, the Brock gang was discussing leaving the state.

Grant and Davis then rode back to Davis's home, arriving about 11:00 P.M. Captain Davis resolved to return the following morning and discuss the missing honey and the gang's plan to leave the state. Wanting to participate, Frank Grant spent the night at Davis's home, as the hour was late.

The following morning the two men were up at daybreak. They rode their horses to Grant's home, then continued the rest of the way on foot along the railroad tracks. Both Mrs. Davis and Frank's mother had tried to persuade the men not to go, but Captain Davis insisted he wanted to talk to the men, catch them with his honey, and offer a settlement or have them arrested before they left the state. For three miles the two men walked along the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad tracks towards Brock's cabin. Both were packing weapons; Frank Grant carried a .44 Winchester carbine, and Captain Davis strapped on a borrowed .44 Colt revolver. When they neared Brock's cabin,

Davis told Grant to put his rifle under a nearby railroad bridge. He didn't want to arouse suspicion if they were seen, and he didn't want young Grant to get any more involved. They were approximately a half mile from the cabin.

The wagon stood empty near the Brock cabin. Charles Dussel was out front attempting to build a fire and holding a club of some sort to stoke it. Soon Charles Brock came out of the cabin and mounted his horse. He carried a bridle as he started off toward his pasture northwest of them. At first Davis concluded his concern that they were leaving the country had been confirmed. Brock appeared to be going to retrieve a working team of horses from his pasture. Dussel then hollered to Brock to take the hobbles off his horse and it would follow him in. They were just retrieving their saddle horses for the day. None of the three men noticed Captain Davis and Frank Grant about two hundred yards away.

Once Brock had left, Captain Davis told Grant to remain at the railroad tracks while he spoke to Dussel and Mueller. As Davis approached the cabin, Dussel remained out front stoking the fire; Mueller, who had not yet appeared, was getting dressed inside. Captain Davis walked up to the cabin and asked Mueller if he would come out and talk, but he refused. Davis then stepped back onto a nearby hill and waited.

While waiting, Davis talked with Dussel outside of the cabin. We only have Captain Davis's word for what was said because Grant was not near enough to hear their words. Unsure of what was happening he watched from a distance as Davis and Dussel faced each other. Suddenly, Grant heard Dussel swear at Davis, then saw him rush at him with his club, swinging and missing. When Dussel struck at him and missed a second time, Davis drew leather and shot into the air, hoping to back Dussel off, but suddenly another shot came from the window of the cabin. Now more threatened, Davis lowered his revolver and shot Dussel. "The ball took effect in the cheek-bone, passing entirely through the head at the base of the brain." He died immediately, his body lying six feet from the cabin.

The barred window prevented Mueller from getting a clean shot at Davis with his rifle. After killing Dussel, Davis rushed the door of the cabin, and as Mueller was turning to put a bead on him, Davis placed a shot "in the center of the forehead which

reached and pulverized the skull." Mueller, however, lived another twenty-four hours before succumbing to the wound. After the shooting stopped, Frank Grant went to the cabin and met Davis at the doorway; as he stared down at the bodies, he heard Davis say, "My God! This is awful." Grant then asked what Davis was going to do and he replied that "he thought he had done enough, and was going home."<sup>8</sup>

Heading back toward Westwater took Davis and Grant in the direction of Brock's pasture. As they began the long walk home on the wagon road leading toward the railroad tracks, Brock rode toward them leading Dussel's horse. Davis, wanting to explain what happened, asked Brock if he was heeled. Brock retorted, "Yes, I am heeled for a son of a bitch like you!" Davis asked him to dismount so they could talk. Again, Brock rebuked him, saying, "I am not going to get down for such a son of a bitch as you," and spurring his horse forward toward Davis, who stepped to his left and grabbed the horse's reins with his right hand. Unarmed, Brock grabbed the chain hobbles he had roped around his horse's neck and struck Davis on his back. Brock's horse jerked away from Davis's grasp and circled. Davis stood in the way of the cabin and told Brock to stop. Brock charged at him again, threatening that if he could get to his cabin where his rifle was, he would kill Davis. Davis responded by shooting Brock from about thirty feet away, hitting his side just above the hip. With Brock still charging, Davis fired a second shot. Hit in the left side of his head, Brock's limp body dropped at Davis's feet. Grant and Davis then returned home to report the shootings.<sup>9</sup>

At Westwater Station Captain Davis telegraphed his brother-in-law, W. J. Henderson, in Grand Junction. The telegraph read: "For very good reason I ran against Brock and his outfit at six o'clock this morning and as a result I want three plain cheap coffins soon as possible. W. E. Davis."<sup>10</sup> The following day, he turned himself in at Moab. Later that day a coroner's jury acquitted him.

Davis had pulled the boots off of the dead men and taken them to his ranch to prove they matched the footprints in the vicinity of his hives and burnt fencepost. James Wells, a Westwater resident and jury member, discovered honey cached near the river below Brock's cabin. Several members of the jury

searched for the hobbles Brock used, but they were not found. Evidence proved the guilt of the Brock gang, but did it warrant the shooting? According to the jury, it did; justifiable homicide was the rendered verdict. One jury member, H. H. Jacobs, felt threatened at the inquest because Captain Davis was present with a revolver strapped on. Other members of the jury were questioned later, but it was not conclusive that Davis had intimidated them into an acquittal. The bodies of the three men were buried near Brock's cabin.

When news of the violence reached Salt Lake City, Deputy Marshal William Goodsell was sent to retrieve Captain Davis for a preliminary hearing before U.S. Commissioner Greenman. Davis's reputation preceded him, and a local newspaper reported he had an "unenviable reputation as a killer," having previously killed two men in Nevada and another in Idaho. Davis voluntarily surrendered and was turned over to stand trial for the murder of Charles Brock. Since Brock had not been armed, it was felt Captain Davis could not argue self-defense.

The trial was held in Utah Territory's First District Court at Provo, Utah, beginning December 19, 1892. Initially, Frank Grant was also implicated in the murder, but the charge was dropped and he did not stand trial. Witnesses clearly established the wounds to Dussel and Mueller, but there were discrepancies in Brock's wound to the head. Contradicting Davis and Grant's testimonies, a few witnesses claimed the bullet hole entered the back of the skull and not the front. The court ordered that Brock's body be exhumed to determine the trajectory of the bullet and where it entered the head. The exhumed evidence corroborated the defendant's claim that the bullet did enter the front forehead above the hairline. Evidence was introduced that Davis had killed a man in Ashley, Utah, in self-defense, and Davis denied another charge, which never came to trial, that he had raped a woman in Colorado. Captain Davis won over many of those attending the trials. The *Salt Lake Herald* dated September 27, 1894, stated, "Captain Davis does not impress one as a disagreeable or quarrelsome man. On the contrary, he is a very gentlemanly appearing fellow, and will make friends where ever he goes."

One question raised in the trial was what had become of the chain hobbles that Captain Davis claimed Brock hit him with.

They had not been found during the original inquiry authorized by the Moab justice of the peace. However, Deputy Marshal Enoch Gray of Provo found them when he accompanied the prisoner Davis to Westwater in October 1892 to allow him to take care of some business matters. The court was packed during all of the proceedings, which lasted about two weeks. Captain Davis eventually was found guilty of voluntary manslaughter. A second trial began on September 24, 1894, and reached the same verdict. Davis was sentenced to eight months in the Grand County Jail.<sup>11</sup>

Captain Davis's case did not remain out of the headlines for very long. Grand County probate judge Jefferson A. Huff wrote a letter, dated January 16, 1895, to J. W. Judd, U.S. attorney, in Salt Lake City. A bill presented by Moab's sheriff, M. H. Darrow, to the county court for Davis's board at his home prompted the letter. It read in part: "Please inform me whether the county is liable when W. E. Davis was not imprisoned, but running at large without a guard."<sup>12</sup> The sheriff had been confused because the words "Utah Penitentiary" had been crossed out on the court order for Davis's imprisonment and replaced with "Grand County." After consulting with other officials, Darrow interpreted the instructions to mean that Captain Davis was not to be jailed and was instead to become a house guest of the sheriff. Sheriff Darrow submitted the bill for room and board when he turned the prisoner over to the new sheriff, William Sommerville.

Neither did this case end Captain Davis's brushes with legal trouble. More than twenty years later, the *Grand Valley Times* on January 30, 1914, included the headline "Bad Man of Early Days in Trouble: Capt. W. E. Davis, Who Killed 3 Men at Westwater, Charged with Murder." Seventy-three years old and separated from his wife, Wilson Ellis Davis, the former Civil War officer, was living at a veteran retirement community at Sawtelle, California, near Los Angeles. On the evening of January 1, 1914, William G. Wheeler's body was discovered after a fire swept the cottage that he was sharing with Captain Davis. The fire was suspicious from the onset and Captain Davis was one of two suspects accusing each other of the act.

William G. Wheeler and Captain Davis were partners in a photography business. Starting the business in Long Beach, they

had recently moved to a location near the Soldiers Home at Sawtelle. Apparently Wheeler was not satisfied with Davis as a partner, and around Christmas, 1913, Wheeler expressed to his nephew, Edwin J. Cook, that he feared Davis and wanted to dissolve their partnership but Davis begged him to continue it for another week. There were indications that Captain Davis had planned the demise of his partner for about a year, but with a week left in the partnership, his planning had to be expedited. Calculating, Davis reportedly developed a plan he felt to be fool-proof. He approached a representative of the Fidelity Casualty and Trust Company of New York and took out a life insurance policy on his partner. He was informed they could not supply a policy naming Davis as the beneficiary but could make it payable to the deceased's estate. Davis agreed to a policy for \$3,500, and "in the case Wheeler is burned to death, the amount of the policy is doubled." The night of Wheeler's murder, Davis checked into a hotel in Los Angeles under the name D. E. Wilson, apparently thinking it would prove his whereabouts at the time of the crime. His explanation for the assumed name was that he was meeting a woman there.

Three days after Wheeler's death, another home burned down, killing Civil War veteran David A. Yarlott. Circumstances seemed similar, and Captain Davis again was implicated. Interestingly, there had been a few other house fires during the year in the Sawtelle area that could have been minimized except for unexplained failures of fire department equipment. Evidence of equipment tampering was located at the fire station nearest to Yarlott's home. A wrench belonging to Davis was found nearby, and several witnesses testified they saw Davis in the vicinity of the fire station shortly before the fire that took Yarlott's life.

The excitement drew large crowds to the preliminary trial of Captain Davis. His attorney team included the first female in California history to defend a murder suspect, Mrs. Georgia P. Bullock. Their argument was simply "that the psychology of old age is scientifically against the commission of crime." Bullock stated further, "The years of violence have passed with Mr. Davis."<sup>13</sup>

Shortly after Wheeler's death and prior to the inquiries that implicated Captain Davis as his murderer, Davis expedited the

burial of his partner. The event was so sudden that Wheeler's nephew, Edwin Cook, didn't have time to inform relatives in Missouri. He had been in communication with them, but before they could decide what to do with Wheeler's body, Davis announced, "Why, Will was buried today."<sup>14</sup> The body was exhumed prior to the preliminary trial to determine through autopsy the true cause of death. The autopsy revealed "evidence that the murdered man's skull had been battered, but the exact nature of the fracture could not be determined because the head was badly burned. The heart shows every indication of cyanide poisoning." The prosecution was set to prove that "Wheeler was poisoned, then beaten, and finally roasted to death."<sup>15</sup>

The grizzly, graphic evidence of Wheeler's death revealed that he "was slain as he slept, the heads of two hand axes being found by the side of his body, which seemed to have rolled from the bed. His burned arms were upstretched as though warding off heavy blows. His body was burned after it had been saturated with kerosene, a large quantity of which was purchased from a nearby merchant two days before the fire. The room in which he slept was a seething furnace, while other rooms in the house burned slowly, indicating an unnatural combustibility in one spot."<sup>16</sup>

Evidently, this may not have been the first insurance fraud Captain Davis had perpetrated. Fifteen years earlier he had a mining partnership with a man in Newcastle, Colorado. Similarly, Davis had an insurance policy written up on his partner. Then, while both of them were in a remote mountainous area, his partner was shot and killed. When Davis tried to cash in on the policy he was arrested, but the circumstantial evidence was too weak to convict him. He left Colorado a free man.

Captain Davis was not so lucky with the Wheeler murder. The police found in Davis's possession notes with Wheeler's forged signature turning over his estate to Captain Davis if he were to die, as well as forged debt notices of debt to Davis. Perhaps the most damning evidence was the claim Davis made against an insurance company for fire damages valued at \$500. Not only did the items he listed as being destroyed turn up in his possession not destroyed, but his claim for them was taken to imply that they would have been in the cottage had the fire been



an accident.

A highlight of the trial was the opening of what was described as a green “ungainly receptacle” belonging to Davis. The green box contained items that seemed worthless to most onlookers: “old blankets, half-worn clothing, a piece of canvas, several shot guns, a fishing rod, two cameras, a number of badly smoked dishes, a pillow, a large piece of buckskin and two hand saws were removed from the box and labeled as evidence.”<sup>17</sup> One other item was removed: “the iron hobbles, a grim memento of border days.”<sup>18</sup>

On May 16, 1914, Captain Wilson Ellis Davis was convicted of first-degree murder for the killing of William G. Wheeler. He was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Charles H. Hallett and James H. Smith

Even before Captain Davis’s conviction for killing Charles Brock and his gang, another shooting had occurred at the small railroad town of Westwater and an old man from the area was crying for Davis to return and avenge the death of his son.

On the morning of February 25, 1894, George D. Grant was overwhelmed with grief and frustration, having held his son Royal for the last time and uncertain how to avenge his death. What began as a family project of building a home for old man Grant’s youngest son, Frank, had ended in another son’s death. Traveling from his ranch near Bitter Creek, George and his two sons Frank and Royal took their wagon along the Salt Lake Wagon Road toward town, then headed south, past Westwater Ranch toward some timber that was on the piece of land Frank claimed. As the wagon neared the timber, Charles H. Hallett stepped out into the road, stopped them, and announced that they were trespassing on his land. Then an unexpected shot rang out, and Royal Grant staggered briefly, acknowledged he was hit, and fell to the ground. The aging father jumped from the wagon seat to his son lying lifeless on the ground. With his head on his father’s lap, Royal spoke his last words, “Yes, I am a dead man.”

Tragedy seemed to follow George Grant’s family. Just a few years earlier, during the summer of 1890, another son, Harvey Grant, died while working as a brakeman for the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. While the train was in transit and pass-

ing a snow shed, he unwittingly looked out from his platform, and the shed fatally pummeled him. The *Grand Junction News* on July 7, 1890, reported Harvey Grant was the sixth such death within the G. D. Grant family. Old man Grant had only been living at Westwater for a short time when the news arrived. In 1892 Frank Grant could easily have met another such fate had the tables been turned when Captain W. E. Davis killed the Brock gang. Old man Grant's bitter words while holding Royal's body suggest something of Captain Davis's character. Grant threatened Hallett for shooting his son, cried out, "you will suffer for this," and then called for Davis. "He called very loud."<sup>19</sup>

Charles H. Hallett was already familiar with Captain Davis from his first visit to Westwater in August 1892. A middle-aged prospector, Hallett had passed through Westwater on his way from the Henry Mountains, where he had found a rare gold piece in some Indian ruins while prospecting.<sup>20</sup> Heading to his home in Aspen, Colorado, he overheard Charles C. Brock, Charles Dussel, and William Mueller threaten to kill Davis. Consequently, Hallett became a witness for the defense in Davis's trial. It was also during that visit that Hallett became interested in a piece of land south of the railroad town. He returned on September 2, 1892, to post a notice of squatter's rights on it.

The piece of land Hallett squatted was part of an old ranch near Westwater Creek that consisted of about one hundred acres of land and had already been fenced in by its former owners, the Bar X Ranch. Unofficial records seem to indicate that the Bar X Ranch probably was spread out over the entire Westwater valley prior to the arrival of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. It was the original Westwater Ranch, and small cabins provided shelter for cowboys who watched cattle. The land in question was not settled when Hallett arrived, but a dilapidated cabin and a fence already stood near what was described as the end of the road that ran down to the bottoms or meadow, and nearby there was timber that Hallett used to repair the cabin. Unfortunately, Frank Grant claimed the same property.

On Sunday morning, February 25, 1894, Charles H. Hallett, his young son Charlie, and a prospector named James H. Smith walked to a posted and timbered area to inspect it; then they returned to an area nearer the cabin to work on a pig pen and fences. The previous day, while Hallett was away at the

Westwater railroad station, James H. Smith had spied the Grant family come down in a wagon and cut timber on the timbered property Hallett had posted for no trespassing. Smith was a recent visitor to Westwater, and he had been invited to stay with the Halletts at the cabin while he was working his placer mine about a mile and a half away. They had known each other for about twelve days. Smith's sighting of the Grants in the vicinity disturbed Hallett, so he carried a rifle for protection. His thirteen-year-old son, Charley, was carrying a new .32 caliber rifle that had been presented to him as a gift by his father's friend, Captain R. D. Landers of Chicago, two nights before. James Smith carried tools when they first went to work on the pig pen and fences, but as they were returning to the cabin, he asked if he could use Charley's rifle to hunt some rabbits and then disappeared.

Unaware of visitors, Charles and Charley crossed over a fence and were walking to their cabin when they noticed the Grants approaching with a wagon. Old man Grant was driving and was headed toward the timber that Hallett had posted. Walking along side were Royal and Frank Grant. When they were about seventy-five yards from the cabin, Charles Hallett approached them and ordered, "Halt, and leave my homestead in peace." Suddenly, Royal Grant stepped forward with a Winchester rifle that his father had borrowed from Captain Davis and pointed it at Hallett, who, with his young son standing next to him, reiterated his desire that they leave in peace. Keeping his rifle leveled on Hallett, Royal told him to throw up his hands or he would shoot him where he stood. Meanwhile, Frank Grant noticed James Smith sneaking up from behind the southeast corner of the cabin. Pulling his pistol from his holster, Frank was taking aim at Smith when he realized Smith was pointing a rifle in their direction. Without any further warning a shot rang out, and Royal Grant dropped to the earth.

After firing the fatal shot at Royal Grant, Smith ducked behind the cabin to reload another cartridge. Noticing this, Frank Grant hurried to where his brother lay dead, grabbed the Winchester lying near the body, and attempted to snap a shot at Smith when he showed himself again. Fortunately for Smith, the rifle misfired. Frank Grant had a pistol he could have used, but he doubted his marksmanship with it and instead threw up his

hands saying, "It is enough, I will quit."

Old man Grant continued cradling his dead son Royal in his arms for awhile, then slowly got up, and with Frank's help put Royal's body into the wagon. He then drove a very long two miles back to their ranch near Bitter Creek. Even in the Grants' demoralized condition, Hallett didn't trust them, so he followed them to a bluff with rifle in hand until they disappeared.

That afternoon a telegram reached Marshal Fowler in Provo, Utah, that said "Come immediately with posse to arrest C. H. Hallett and Jack Smith, who have killed a man here." It was signed G. D. Grant.<sup>21</sup> Before the day was over, Sheriff Brown and Deputy Marshals Mount and Bean boarded the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad in Provo and traveled to Westwater, where they found the accused men waiting for them.

Sometime during 1893, Charles H. Hallett had brought his wife Chloe and their two sons, Charley and Rosco, with him to Westwater. Charley, the oldest boy, was eleven years old, and his brother Rosco was seven years younger, being born about 1890, the same time his family moved to Aspen, Colorado, from Kansas City, Missouri. At Aspen, Charles Hallett was a mine engineer and was well known in mining circles throughout the state. He was approximately fifty-five years old when he came to Westwater while prospecting and was described as a "man of family, and of rather a pleasing appearance." One source indicated Hallett was a Knights Templar, a member of a Masonic fraternal organization. The Halletts apparently could not find a satisfactory home, having resided briefly in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Colorado after they were married thirteen years earlier at Fort Scott, Kansas. Before his marriage, Charles Hallett served four years in the federal army during the war, and before that he fought Indians. For a short time he took up railroading in Kansas, but it was his engineering background that eventually secured him mining work at Aspen and brought him west.

Little is known of James H. Smith.<sup>22</sup> Anyone in the region who knew him did so for only the short period when he worked at a bar in Grand Junction, Colorado. Apparently the owners of the bar and their customers liked him enough to claim he had a good reputation. During the trial, some individuals speculated that Hallett hired James Smith to come to Westwater and kill

Royal Grant. For some time, Grant had been threatening Hallett about the property that ultimately cost him his life. But Smith did not measure up as a hired gun; there was no evidence presented that he even owned a gun. Shooting Grant nearly in the heart does suggest some firearm proficiency though. Smith was younger than Hallett and thought to be about forty-five years old, and “far from ones ideal of a murderer, he looks a good type of western manhood.”<sup>23</sup>

James H. Smith was born in New York City in 1840. He traveled to California with his parents, residing there until approximately 1872; then he went to Colorado where he worked many of the mining camps. An engineer by trade, he said that until two weeks before the shooting, he had not been within the borders of Utah since he first came to Colorado twenty-some years before. He came to Westwater by “horse and cart” with a partner, an M. Anderson from Grand Junction, to work a placer claim there. Anderson introduced Smith to Hallett, who then generously invited him to stay at the cabin while attending to their claim.

The beginning of the trouble at Westwater likely came with the arrival of the Darrow brothers, Frank and George. The *Daily Enquirer* reported: “From what we can learn from parties acquainted in that country, the cause of bad blood is that Colorado parties have of late come in to buy land. The people who have lived for some length of time, and have been rather indifferent in regard to the land, are now anxious to claim all that they possibly can, in order to take advantage of the little boom, and this leads to conflicting claims, quarrels and bloodshed.”<sup>24</sup>

In fact the trouble did not end with the death of Royal Grant. While Hallett and Smith were awaiting their trial in a Provo jail, Mrs. Hallett remained at Westwater. She was nervous and frightened being alone to protect her children and their home. Remaining close to the cabin, she was suspicious of anyone in the vicinity. On March 11, 1894, just prior to Hallett and Smith’s trial, in a replay of the original message after Royal Grant was killed, another telegram arrived in Provo and claimed a new shooting at Hallett’s ranch. Again it was signed G. D. Grant. Marshal Fowler and Sheriff Brown boarded a Denver and Rio Grande Western train and headed for Westwater to investigate. This time nobody had been shot. After a few days the disgusted lawmen returned to Provo. They reported that a hobo named

Patrick O'Donohue claimed that he was shot at three times while in the vicinity of the Hallett cabin. The marshal learned from Mrs. Hallett that the hobo had approached her home the previous Saturday for food, which she freely gave to him. She denied firing any shots at him. Old man Grant was lost for words when the lawmen questioned him about sending the telegram when nobody was hurt.<sup>25</sup>

A critical witness for the defense of Charles Hallett was Captain R.D. Landers of Chicago, Illinois. Landers and Hallett were old friends, and his visit to Westwater couldn't have come at a more opportune time. He came to Westwater in November 1893 for his health and remained there much of the time until briefly before the trial started on April 3, 1894. During his stay he observed numerous abuses and threats directed at Hallett by Royal Grant. The .32 caliber rifle that he gave to young Charley Hallett two days before the shooting became the murder weapon. The Westwater land boom must have captured Captain Lander's attention because he considered making Hallett an offer for his land but backed down when he was warned not to by local ranchers.

Realizing how critical Landers was for Hallett's defense, the Grants swore out a timely warrant for his arrest. On April 2, 1894, one day before the trial began, Sheriff Darrow of Moab arrived at Provo to arrest Landers on a warrant charging him with assault with a deadly weapon for deterring the Grants from commencing work on the Hallett ranch shortly before the trial. After Mrs. Hallett's disturbing incident with the hobo, Landers had returned from Provo to Westwater to assist her until the trial. Apparently, while there he deterred the Grants from encroaching on the contested land yet again. The warrant was not served, and Landers remained in Provo to testify, to the detriment of the Grants.<sup>26</sup>

Although some early residents of Westwater claimed old man Grant was a good man, such was not said of his sons Frank and Royal. During the second trial of Captain Davis that took place in September 1894, Frank Grant was living in Telluride, Colorado, out of that court's jurisdiction. Although he was the only witness to Davis's killing of members of the Brock gang, the prosecuting attorney said he "regarded Grant as being as great a criminal as Davis, and he would not put him on the stand if he could."<sup>27</sup> In fact, all of the witnesses from Westwater testified

during the Davis trial that Frank Grant was troublesome. Royal Grant's reputation fared little better when his actions were exposed during the trial of Hallett and Smith. Westwater constable W. V. Champlain described Royal Grant as a "quarrelsome person and a bulldozer."

After months of ongoing crime drama at Westwater, the trial of Charles H. Hallett and James H. Smith began on April 3, 1894, in Provo, Utah. The opening testimony at the trial came from George Grant, who told the court that his son Frank had obtained the ranch where Hallett resided from Charles Wallace, manager of the Bar X Cattle Company. The purchase of the property supposedly occurred on January 12, 1894, but after reviewing the bill of sale the Grants presented as evidence, the court concluded it was to purchase, not the land, but the rights to improvements made by the Bar X Cattle Company on the land. The Grants relied on the bill of sale as their primary justification to enter the land and clear timber to build a home for Frank Grant.

Old man Grant testified they did not expect any trouble, even though they borrowed a .48 caliber rifle from Captain Davis's home the day before the incident. Grant claimed they intended to use the rifle for rabbit hunting. When questioned why they would use such a large caliber on rabbits, he explained that he was unaware a .48 caliber bullet would blow apart a rabbit and, besides, they hadn't seen any rabbits on either day to shoot at. He testified that he was not aware that Royal was carrying the rifle when Hallett stopped them and that both of his sons were carrying axes when they noticed the Halletts running toward them with weapons. He admitted that his son Frank regularly packed a pistol.

Although the accounts of the killing were substantially the same, the Grants' testimonies of the events leading up to and following Royal Grant's death clearly contradicted those given by Hallett and Smith. According to old man Grant, it was Charles Hallett who had a rifle pointed in his direction when they were told to stop and it was Royal who stepped forward and told Hallett to hold off so that they could discuss the problem, when a shot was heard and Royal keeled over dead. Old man Grant claimed that while he was holding Royal's lifeless body, he said to Hallett, "You have shot my son and you will suffer for it." Responding to



his claim, Hallett denied firing the deadly shot, then Grant indicated Hallett sarcastically lifted his head and laughed. Grant reemphasized that he was not aware that his son had a rifle when the shooting occurred. Frank Grant, trying to preserve a little dignity, claimed that when his brother was killed, he jumped down from the wagon and picked up the dropped rifle and snapped it at Hallett; then condescendingly, he mentioned Hallett ran behind a tree. Frank Grant admitted he was a poor shot with a pistol, and that was the reason he went for the dropped rifle. Unfortunately, the rifle was not loaded, prompting his surrender to Smith.

The Grants attempted to convince the court that Charles Hallett had threatened them, Royal in particular. They claimed that two days before the shooting Royal, Frank, and their friend Pat Shea went to Hallett's cabin to pick up a stove that belonged to Captain Davis. They expected Hallett to hand over the stove or payment for it. Instead, they said, Hallett threatened to shoot them if they entered his cabin. Frank D. Darrow, whose entry into the valley had caused the small land boom, said he heard similar threats toward Royal Grant from Hallett, who said he would give the Grants "a war to the bitter end." Frank Grant denied that he and his brother were interested in the controversial land, but it was clear that nearly all of the prosecution's witnesses stood to gain from the Grants' possession of the land. One witness for the prosecution testified overhearing Frank Grant offer Pat Shea half the settlement for the land should they get it away from Hallett.

Witnesses for the defense nullified the prosecution's testimonies by proving that Royal Grant had made the threats. Regarding the stove incident, witnesses for the defense provided a context for Hallett's threats to the Grants. When Hallett refused to hand over Davis's stove to Royal Grant, he was told to come outside the cabin, and in front of Hallett's wife and Captain Landers, Royal threatened Hallett that if he did come out, he would not be returning to his wife, and Frank Grant said, "Damn him, we will hang him." Landers, admitted that this angered Hallett to the point that he returned the Grants' threats with his own, but he had later apologized for making them.

Three key witnesses against the Grants weren't present for the trial but left depositions testifying to additional threats made

by Royal Grant. John G. Lobstein, J. C. Kessler, and Aaron Butts from Chicago were recreational visitors to Westwater on February 22. They heard Royal Grant say, "Hallett, I want you to stop posting up notices in this valley you damned son of a bitch you never owned a foot of land in this valley, and you don't now. You damned old horse cock. A man that will take that will take anything damn you. I'll get even with you." Hallett responded to the threats by saying he did not "answer to a man like that." These testimonies were considered significant because the three men clearly had nothing to gain from the outcome of the trial.

Ultimately a decision centered on the ownership of the property. The court declared that a man had a right to defend his property. While Frank Grant had a bill of sale for improvements that the Bar X Cattle Company had made, he had made none himself. In fact, during the four years that Frank had lived at Westwater, his family hadn't shown any interest in the property until the Darrow brothers arrived and started buying up land. George Grant had not been on the property for two years, even though it was only two miles from his Bitter Creek Ranch. Evidence supporting Hallett's improvements to the property piled up, and testimony after testimony supported his claims of ownership.

After Presiding Judge Smith concluded that Hallett owned the property, he decided to try the defendants separately. Charles Hallett could be convicted only if it could be proven that he somehow orchestrated the killing of Royal Grant. Separating the cases made James Smith's defense tougher because of lack of conclusive evidence that either he or Hallett's lives were endangered when he fired upon Royal Grant without first making an attempt to settle the confrontation in a more peaceable manner. Although both men were expected to be acquitted, only Hallett was. Smith was convicted of voluntary manslaughter and sentenced to eighteen months in the penitentiary.<sup>28</sup>

Charles H. Hallett resided at Westwater until the turn of the century when he moved his family downstream to near the Cisco take-out, establishing a ranch later named the Rose Ranch.

### The Fleagle Gang

Westwater was often used as a temporary residence for fleeing criminals, and existing town residents wisely shied away from

asking questions of any suspicious strangers in the area. We will never know of all the criminals who spent a day or two, or even a week or more, at Westwater dodging the law. Former Westwater resident John L. "Jack" Malin tells a story about several suspicious visitors who stopped for a week or two at his family's boarding house. Jack was born on November 16, 1919, to Lula and Elwood Clark Malin, who resided at Westwater. Elwood Malin was a rancher and part-time deputy sheriff, and Lula ran the town boarding house, a central location across the dirt road southeast of the railroad station and general store. The general store had been around since the turn of the century and included a gas station, slot machines, a pool table, and a post office. Having all of the amenities useful for the small town and surrounding area, it understandably became the primary social headquarters, a place to kick back for a moment, visit, and play cards.

Some time during the late 1920s when Jack was still a young boy, at least three men arrived at the boarding house and stayed for a week, maybe two. Jack recalled one of the men's name was Jake Fleagle, and a second was called Abshier; he could not remember the third man's name. Every morning the three men would load four suitcases into their Marmon car in front of the boarding house, then drive the car about three hundred feet down the dirt road to the general store, where they would spend the day playing poker. Inside the store they insisted on always having the same seats, which all faced the only two doors leading into the pool hall where they played. The same routine was reenacted daily for the week or two that they remained in town. Clearly, the townspeople observed, the men seemed fidgety about something, but as was their rule, they did not inquire.

One morning the men got into their car and drove past the pool hall, seeming to be headed out of town. Elwood Malin suspected that the men had ditched their board bill, and he took off in his car after them on the road to Cisco but never saw them again. It didn't take long for Jake Fleagle to notice they were being followed, so he and his gang drove off the main road and hid their car in Westwater Wash. After eluding Malin, Fleagle doubled back to Westwater, paid the board bill, and then headed to Green River to catch a train. Jack never discovered the reason for the men's odd behavior.<sup>29</sup>

The infamous story of Jake Fleagle and his gang may begin on May 23, 1928, or maybe we can trace it back further to 1926 when four men posing as wealthy Oklahoma businessmen made a grand entrance into Glenwood Springs, Colorado, where they rented a room overlooking two banks. Two of the men pretended to be interested in purchasing a horse ranch on Divide Creek, and while they were in Glenwood Springs they incorporated the Divide Creek Oil Company, sending two of their partners to Rifle, Colorado, to conduct business there. William Messick and W. H. Ryan took up residence in Glenwood Springs above the First National Bank, which offered a clear view of the Union State Bank across the street. Methodically, the gang members mixed into the community, attending social events and promoting their oil company. Then in the fall of 1927 the men mysteriously disappeared without an explanation or a forwarding address. Shortly before their departure, though, Gordon Hollis purchased the First National Bank in Rifle and transferred \$80,000 to a depository in Denver. Perhaps the transaction affected their plans or residents became suspicious of them. It would be a couple of years before the residents of these two communities would learn the true identity of the men who had been observing their town for nearly a year apparently casing the banks.<sup>30</sup>

At 1:00 P.M. on May 23, 1928, brothers Jake (whose numerous aliases included W. H. Ryan) and Ralph Fleagle, George Johnson Abshier (alias William Messick), and Howard L. "Heavy" Royston entered the First National Bank in Lamar, Colorado. For a number of years, perhaps since as early as 1920, small-time criminal Jake Fleagle had thought the bank at Lamar would be an easy target for robbing but had put it off until he had enough dependable help. Perhaps finding the job not as easy as he originally thought, he partnered first with his brother Ralph, then later they brought on George J. Abshier of Grand Junction. The trio came close to deciding to rob the Lamar bank several times but then backed down. It was not until they brought in a fourth member, Howard L. Royston, that they felt they were ready to make their move.

Although the robbery was well planned, the gang was surprised at the onset when A. Newton Parish, who was the bank president and a former state senator, pulled out a pistol and shot

Royston, wounding him in the jaw. Bullets flew between Parish and gang members until two bullets met their mark in the bank president, bringing him down. Parish's son John, a teller at the bank, was expected to be the gang's hostage, except he was shot in the heart while running to his dying father. The gang fetched \$219,000 in cash and bonds and took two other hostages, Eskel A. Lundgren and Everett A. Kessinger. Lundgren was lucky to be released unharmed a short distance outside of Lamar. Then twelve miles outside of town, at Dry Creek, the gang got into a shootout with Prowers County sheriff Lloyd Alderman. Alderman's car was disabled, and the outlaws escaped into Kansas to the Fleagle's family farm near Garden City.

Royston was in desperate need of medical attention so the other three gangsters dressed up like farm hands and lured Dr. W. W. Weininger, from Dighton, Kansas, with a story that Royston was injured in a tractor accident. Dr. Weininger followed the men to the Fleagle Ranch in his own automobile. After attending to Royston, Weininger was told he would be taken to another location for a few days while the gang made its getaway. Instead, he was driven about thirty miles away, where his car was pushed over an embankment; then he was told he could leave on foot. Turning his back to leave, he was shot and fell over the embankment, landing next to his car. While dead men cannot talk, evidence can speak volumes, and in this case a single fingerprint belonging to Jake Fleagle was left on the right rear window of Dr. Weininger's car. The gang also murdered their hostage, Everett Kessinger. His body was discovered on June 12, 1928, in an abandoned shack near Liberal, Kansas, with several gunshots in the back of his skull.

For several weeks afterward over one thousand men searched for the cold-blooded killers in Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Nebraska, and Oklahoma. With anxiety running high over the \$10,000 reward money, numerous false rumors spread of the robbers' location, primarily in eastern Colorado and western Kansas. Some critics speculated that the large reward allowed the robbers to escape because everyone acted selfishly and did not coordinate their efforts very well during the search. Tension mounted among posse members, even resulting in two volunteers who were suspected of being the robbers getting shot and wounded

while patrolling an area near Norton, Kansas.<sup>31</sup> Eventually the posses returned empty handed to their homes, leaving the sheriffs the burden of unraveling the mysterious killers' identities and whereabouts.

The Fleagle gang members eluded authorities for more than a year without anyone knowing their identity. Numerous men were rounded up during the fifteen-month search. Eventually the number totaled 157 suspects, most of whom were released, though some of them were implicated in other unsolved crimes and remained in custody.<sup>32</sup>

As for the actual gang members, shortly after the robbery Abshier took Royston to St. Paul, Minnesota, to obtain treatment for his blown-off jaw, which left a scar that extended four inches from his lips along his chin. Little more is known of the whereabouts of the Fleagle gang following the Lamar bank robbery. Eventually they split up, although one area they visited during their travels was Abshier's home at Grand Junction, fifty miles from Westwater.

Eventually Jake Fleagle's single fingerprint found on Dr. Weininger's car and his compulsive criminal activities identified the gang members. On June 12, 1929, William Harrison Holden, one of Jake Fleagle's many aliases, was arrested as a suspect in a train holdup near Stockton, California. The FBI and other agencies had not made much progress with fingerprinting and identification up to this point, but Holden's fingerprint was forwarded anyway to the FBI in Washington, D.C., for recording. There, FBI fingerprint expert Albert B. Ground identified Holden as Jake Fleagle from former fingerprints taken when he served time at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in 1916. Apparently Agent Ground was not satisfied with simply identifying Holden as Fleagle; captivated by the peculiar print, he searched his records for other unidentified prints that had recently crossed his desk. Finding the fingerprint taken from Dr. Weininger's car, Ground matched it to Fleagle.<sup>33</sup>

The chase was not over yet, however, as Jake Fleagle had been released from custody in California before his identification became known. Not finding Jake, law officers pursued his family and eventually located and arrested his brother Ralph. Once captured, Ralph Fleagle erroneously thought that he had made an

agreement with law officers that he would avoid the death penalty by fingering the other gang members. The dominoes then began to tumble as each member except Jake Fleagle was shortly apprehended. The waiver of the death penalty for Ralph Fleagle was denied and eventually all three of the captured men were sentenced to hang.

Jake Fleagle continued to avoid authorities, though he offered to turn himself in if he and his brother would be prosecuted in Kansas, where there was no capital punishment. His offer denied, Jake tried and failed to arrange his brother's escape from Canon City Prison. Eventually, tracing the letters that Fleagle mailed to the governor of Colorado to try to save his brother's life provided an approximate location where Jake was hiding out, in the vicinity of southern Missouri or northern Arkansas. On October 14, 1930, he boarded a train in Branson, Missouri, heading to the nearby town of Hollister. Numerous law enforcement officers were on the same train preparing to search for him. He was identified prior to boarding and, when he became trapped on the railroad car, instead of giving himself up, he went for his pistol. Jake was shot in the abdomen and died the following day.<sup>34</sup>

Abshier and Jake Fleagle were implicated in several other robberies, including the Denver Mint in 1922 and possibly the Loeffler store robbery in Grand Junction. Tight-lipped Abshier only confessed to his part in the Lamar bank robbery and did not divulge any additional information that may have solved other crimes he was suspected of. All three of the captured men converted to Catholicism during the short time that they were at Canon City Prison, then on July 11, 1930, Ralph Fleagle met his maker, being hanged by the neck. Eight days later George Johnson Abshier and Howard L. Royston followed suit.

John Malin's account of the Fleagle gang residing at his parents' boarding house is intriguing but cannot be viewed as entirely reliable. His recollection was that his father, after being ditched at Westwater Creek, became aware of the gang traveling to Green River, Utah. There they left their car and boarded a train to Grand Junction, where they were arrested by Sheriff Lumley. His memory of the Fleagle gang's capture thus does not correspond with the facts, but the detail he recalled of their peculiar habits does give credence to his claim that they stayed at



Westwater. Malin estimated that occurred sometime between 1922 and 1930. There could have been numerous reasons for the Fleagle gang to stop at Westwater, including surveying for escape routes or hiding out following one of their earlier holdups before Royston joined them, or Westwater could have been where they stayed after they disappeared from Kansas and before at least two of them made it to California.

### General Lawlessness

Other criminal activities took place in and around Westwater. Some were not publicized, but they show that the remoteness of the area made it a tempting sanctuary for the lawless. Approximately three miles west of Westwater at Cottonwood Station on December 2, 1919, José Lopez was cooking breakfast in the section house while two of his countrymen from Mexico remained in bed asleep. For reasons never determined Lopez attacked the sleeping Francisco Rodríguez with an axe, striking him with six blows to the head. The other man woke up and, frightened, ran out into the cold to inform the section foreman who lived nearby. When the foreman arrived, he discovered Lopez “had proceeded with the cooking of breakfast and was mixing some bread,” apparently unconcerned over the gruesome crime he had just committed. Rodríguez was dying and lived only a short time.<sup>35</sup> It was said to have been the “most gruesome cold-blooded murder ever committed in Grand County” up to that time. Before the month was over, Lopez took his own life by cutting his throat with glass while in the Price, Utah, jail awaiting trial.

There were other conflicts among resident aliens working for the railroad. John Malin recalled a track walker for the railroad who heard rumors that his Mexican wife was having an affair each night that he walked the tracks. One night he cut his walk short and discovered her with another man and shot them.<sup>36</sup> Another incident that took place at Westwater on October 29, 1922, involved a cook, Frank Yeaman, who took a large butcher knife to a Mexican gang worker named Pat Trujillo while he was eating his breakfast. The hodgepodge of foreign employees hired by the railroad and sheep camps, along with cowboys and miners, seemed to create a volatile environment. John Malin recalled that there was a fight nearly every weekend at Westwater.

Further down the tracks Robert W. Mock of Grand Junction got a bit mouthy during a dance at Cisco and picked a fight that resulted in his death on January 17, 1931. Stepping outside the dance hall, Mock confronted L. E. "Tudy" Williams and was reportedly knocked to the ground after two punches to his face from the smaller man. Shortly after the fight, Mock was discovered dead. The autopsy revealed, however, that a human fist could not have done the damage Mock's face had received. Two Basque sheepmen were then indicted and the three men were charged with conspiring to kill Mock. Eventually Williams was acquitted, and Basque sheepman Serefin Olerain was accused of battering Mock's face in with brass knuckles after he was already down on the ground.

An earlier Cisco incident occurred on January 1, 1913, when "Three-Fingered Jack" Miller shot and killed José Lujon during a game of cards. Miller owed ten dollars to Lujon on a loan, and when Miller was not ready to pay up, Lujon left the tent they were playing in, returning shortly with a knife. Miller then grabbed the tent owner's pistol and shot Lujon three times.

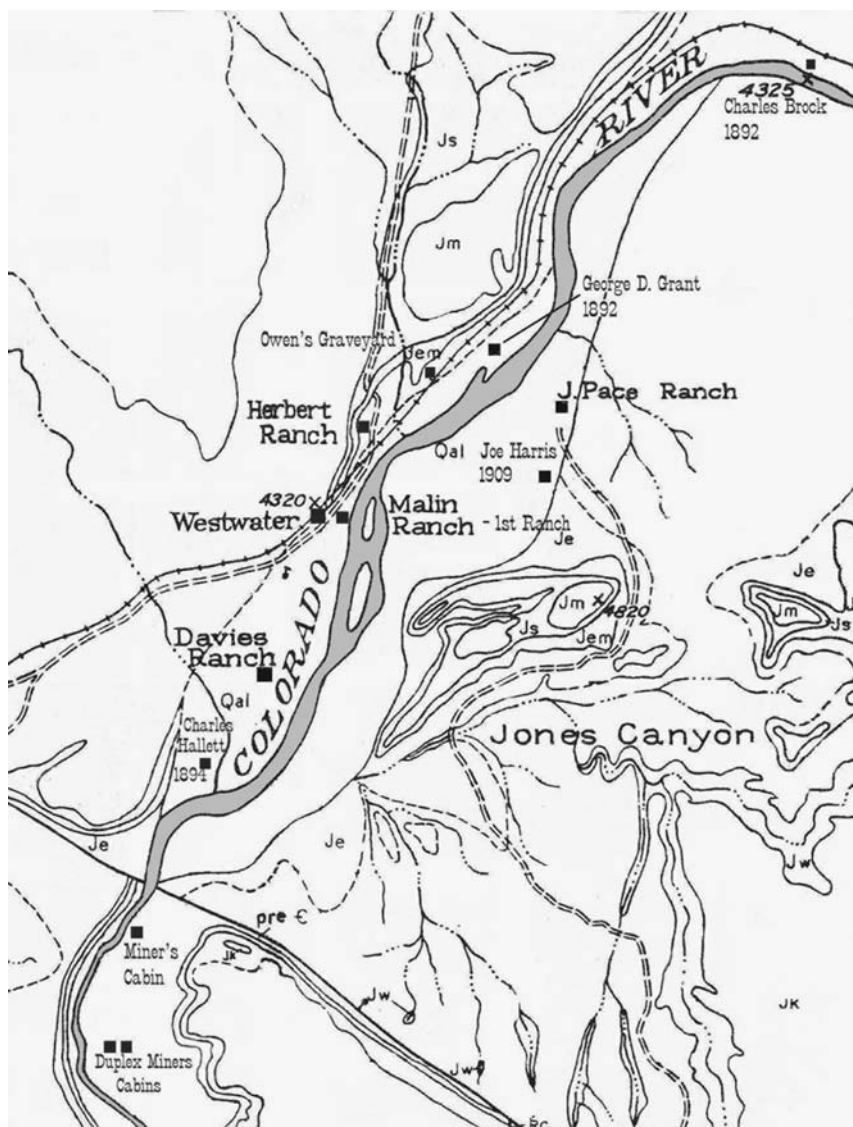
Westwater station agent W. C. Downey did not fit the mold of a killer, but on November 19, 1912, he was provoked to violence by William E. Linn's constant abuse. A large man, Linn was employed by the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad as a carpenter and had recently transferred to Westwater. On that day he was grossly intoxicated and had tried to "quarrel and fight with nearly everybody in Westwater." He had entered Downey's office four times, disrupting his work answering telegraph messages and taking train orders. In fact, Downey feared that any further distractions by Linn might result in train accidents. So when Linn returned, Downey grabbed an iron stove poker and began hitting the much larger man, who fought back but was overcome by the blows. Leaving the building, Linn stumbled across the street and fell to the ground unconscious. The trial did not go beyond the preliminary stage as the judge could discern no willful wrongdoing on Downey's part. Moreover, the testimony of the examining Dr. Bull of Grand Junction was that the blows alone would not have killed Linn, but his intoxicated condition and the delayed medical attention while transporting him by train to Grand Junction caused his death.<sup>37</sup>

On March 7, 1929, Westwater residents reported a “mysterious rider” in the area. Riding a “bald-faced” horse and leading a pack horse, the rider kept a distance from the Westwater residents so that no one could identify him. They speculated as to why he was there. Was he hiding from the law, and was he responsible for several horse killings and other strange events that happened during his stay? Nobody ever found out, but during the two weeks he was in the area, several horses were found dead from shots to their heads, their meat used for coyote bait.<sup>38</sup> The Westwater residents’ description of the “mysterious rider” epitomizes all of the numerous strangers through the years about whom they could say, “No one seems to know who he is or where he came from or where he goes.” Owen Malin recalled several “shady characters” who came to Westwater while he lived there, and unless they volunteered their name and reason for being there, nobody asked. “You lived longer that way.”

## Cattle versus Sheep

Although Westwater's modern history likely began with outlaws hiding between jobs and miners rushing towards the San Juan gold bust, the valley was not overlooked in passing. It captivated men like Captain Davis, Charles Brock, and Charles Hallett to the point that they returned to attempt to make a living off of the land. They were not alone.

Cattle may have been in Westwater Valley before the railroad, and they departed shortly after the railroad discontinued using Westwater as a train station in 1931. The Box X (or Bar X) Cattle Company was already settled at Westwater in 1889 when Frank C. Kendrick entered the valley to survey for the Denver, Colorado Canyon and Pacific Railway.<sup>1</sup> According to Kendrick's notes dated April 10, 1889, the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad had by then surveyed the changed course the standard gauge tracks would take nearer the Colorado River. The shift nearer the river provided a greater opportunity for cattlemen and sheepherders to move into the area and ship their livestock or fleece to markets. Ranches—primarily cattle ranches—soon sprang up throughout the area, claiming considerable land between the state line and Cisco, an area where the railroad generally followed the course of the Colorado River. Obviously, the Colorado and its water are not accessible at some points along this section, including in much of Westwater Canyon, but there used to be more springs throughout the region that have since dried up. Most of the settlers were small ranchers who visited the valley and became impressed enough to return.



Locations of prominent ranches and homesteads in the Westwater area.

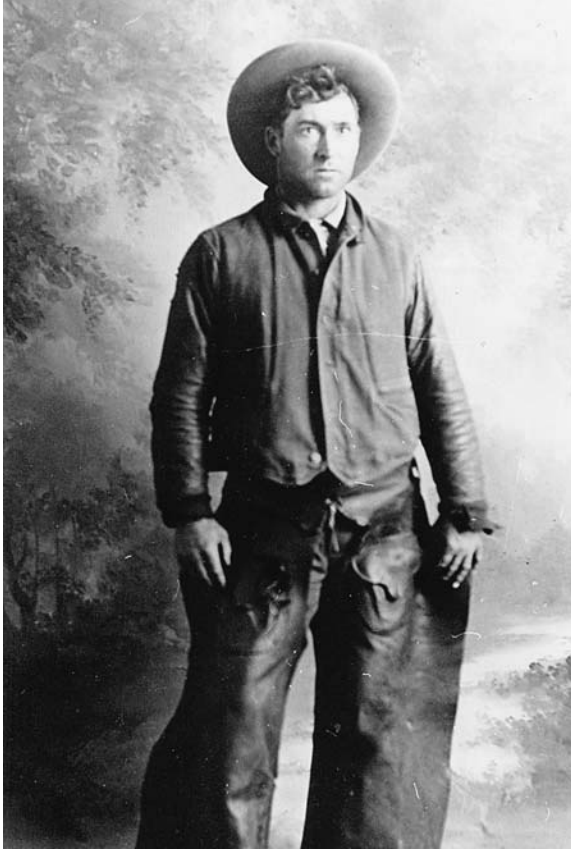


Photo of former Westwater resident George Walter Bryson. Born June 8, 1880, Walt's family lived near Westwater Creek during the late 1880s and early 1900s. Walt's youngest sister died as a young child at their home in Westwater when her high chair tipped over into the fireplace. Bryson Canyon nearby in the Book Cliffs is likely named after the early ranching family. Photo courtesy of his daughter Ruth P. Grennie and granddaughter Connie Badayos.

As in a John Wayne western, trouble seemed to come with the mix of cattle, sheep, and land. One of the first recorded incidents of cattle rustling at Westwater occurred when Charles Brock was caught red-handed with a slab of Captain Wilson Ellis Davis's beef hanging from his cabin. There may have been several similar instances involving Brock between 1890 and 1892. Rustling combined with other misdemeanors eventually cost Brock his life. During the fall of 1904 Westwater resident Joe



Unknown cowboys standing in front of the sheep-shearing plant once located at Westwater. Photo courtesy of Ila B. Reay.

Harris was released from Colorado State Penitentiary at Canon City. He had been sentenced to spend five to eight years in prison for the 1902 killing of millionaire cattleman Charles R. Sieber, president of the huge Sieber Cattle Company of Glade Park, Colorado. Sieber was about fifty-five years old when he was killed on the morning of August 22, 1902. At least nine of his men saw Sieber and Harris ride toward them on horseback and, just as they arrived, Harris pull his pistol and shoot at Sieber four times. Three hit their mark.

Charles R. Sieber was of German descent and as a child migrated to Canada with his parents. While there he reportedly led a hard life after he was “boarded out” to a difficult taskmaster. Eventually he made his way into the United States and finally to Colorado about sixteen years prior to his death. He established his cattle operation through a couple of partnerships, and during the 1890s his company owned a considerable number of cattle, which grazed at Glade Park during the winters and Pinon Mesa in the





Wild horses at Malin Ranch at Westwater. Photo courtesy of Ila B. Reay.

summer. He died leaving a wife and eleven children.<sup>2</sup> Shortly afterward the company changed its name to the S-Cross Ranch.

After the shooting, Joe Harris refused to talk until the trial. Interestingly, both Sieber and Harris were well known and respected throughout southwestern Colorado and Grand County, and the citizens of the area felt as sorry for Harris as they did for the deceased, disbelieving he could break the law after all he had done to maintain it. Of Joseph Harris the *Grand Valley Times* wrote, he “has lent great personal aid to the sheriff here in running down outlaws, often going days over the desert, without food while on their trail.”<sup>3</sup> Harris claimed Sieber had charged him with cattle rustling and was bringing him into his camp with an unobserved Winchester rifle pointed at him. Feeling threatened, Harris took his first opportunity to take advantage of Sieber and drew on him before he could get a shot off. Once Sieber fell from his horse, Harris’s first act was to walk over and pick up the Winchester that fell to the dirt with him. A retrial was conducted in the fall of 1904, where he again pleaded self-defense; the Moab paper reported, “from the testimony given, it is difficult to see how a jury could even come to any other conclusions.”<sup>4</sup> Harris was acquitted at the second trial and returned to his home at Westwater.

He was well liked by his friends, but carried a disdain for those who were not. He owned six hundred acres of land and was a neighbor to Robert and Florence L. Fuller, who also lived across the river at the mouth of Jones Canyon east of the small town at

Westwater. Far from being neighborly, Harris did not like the Fullers, and for many years he tried to drive them off the land so he could claim the area for himself. When Robert L. Fuller died in 1902, Joseph Pace became an employee of Mrs. Fuller and later a partner in the Pace-Fuller Cattle Company. By partnering with the widow Florence Fuller, Joe Pace found himself at odds with Joe Harris.

Harris threatened Pace several times during the years that he worked for Florence Fuller. At one time Harris, with his hand on his holstered six-shooter, stalked Pace through Fuller's home because Pace had forgotten to bar up the fence separating their lands the night before. Pace was forty-eight years old in 1909 and had a notch on his gun from an accidental killing at Steamboat Springs, Colorado, fourteen years earlier. He had always been known as a good shot and in his later years could still put four or five holes in a can thrown in the air or rolled along the ground.<sup>5</sup> Pace and his friend Elwood Malin would compete in shooting cans from the hip, and each demonstrated great accuracy.

It is hard to say if there was any other reason besides the crowded range that made Harris hostile toward Fuller and Pace. It has been claimed that Joseph Pace worked for the Sieber Cattle Company when Harris killed Charles Sieber.<sup>6</sup> If so perhaps Harris pursued a vendetta against Pace for the two years he spent in prison. Whatever transpired between these men brought out the worst of the once law-abiding Joe Harris. A friend of Harris, I.E. McFarland, testified that he once suggested they buy something to celebrate the upcoming holidays, and Harris retorted: "I have only two holidays now. One of these is the date Bob Fuller died and the other is when I killed old Sieber." Harris at the time had bought a new pistol and was admiring it, which prompted McFarland to ask if he intended to add a new holiday to his list. To this Harris replied, "Yes, if Pace doesn't get out of here he will furnish the holiday."<sup>7</sup>

Although Harris was considered a law-abiding citizen, he continuously set traps to force Pace's hand. One was a narrow chute he built just off of the Pace Fuller range leading to a watering hole on Harris's land. Once the cattle went through the chute, they were trapped on Harris's land with no feed. In one spring alone this trap was responsible for killing one third of the Pace-Fuller cattle. Pace

also found some of their steers shot and asked Harris about it, receiving the reply "Yes, they were shot and you son-of-a-bitch it ought to be a warning to you that if you don't get out of here you will go the same way." Harris was always suspecting cattle rustling. During the 1902 trial for the killing of Charles Sieber, it was brought to the court's attention that Harris had suspected Sieber or some of his men of rustling his herd. Then in 1906 Harris brought another Westwater rancher, Charles Rounds, before Justice Cooley of Cisco for killing one of his steers. Rounds was convicted and sentenced to 150 days in jail or a \$150 fine.<sup>8</sup> In October 1909 there were two pending suits against Joseph Pace and Florence Fuller for damages to Harris's land that he claimed were from the trespassing of their cattle onto his land. The suits, it turned out, would never be heard.

On the morning of October 3, 1909, Joe Harris arose after staying overnight with his friend L. P. Stubbs, whose ranch was along the Little Dolores River. Harris had rheumatism and so needed a little help from his friend getting dressed. Harris also had difficulty walking because his insteps had been amputated the year before due to severe frostbite after he was caught in a snowstorm and lost for five days and nights without food while working for, surprisingly, the Sieber Cattle Company. Mounting up, the two friends headed in different directions as Stubbs went to Westwater and Harris to Jones Canyon, where his ranch was. It was the last time Stubbs would see his friend alive.

That morning Joseph Pace, Florence Fuller, and hired hand Bert Graham went riding after cattle. They had just brought them down from Pinon Mesa and were searching for weaners when they saw Joseph Harris driving some of their cattle from his land. At the time they didn't think anything unusual about his actions, but on their return for dinner they saw Harris driving some of the Pace-Fuller cattle up the lane. He then set loose the cattle just before Pace, Fuller, and Graham arrived and headed north toward his ranch. The three met him as they approached from the northeast. Pace immediately asked Harris what he was doing with their cattle. Harris replied it was none of his business, turned his horse to face Pace, and threw down a stick he was carrying. Then his right hand went for his hip pocket. Within seconds Pace had dismounted with a .30-.30 Winchester rifle and



Numerous sheep sheds and corrals are located near the mouth of Westwater Creek. This large sheep facility may have been built in the 1930s when J. W. Hardison tried to revive the sheep-shearing industry at Westwater.

shot Harris three times before he hit the ground. Like Charles Sieber in 1902, Harris received two fatal shots to the heart; a third shot to the head sealed his fate.<sup>9</sup> Rumor had it that when Pace shot Harris he said, "This is for Charlie Sieber."<sup>10</sup> Such a statement was not brought up during the trial, however.

Within two months Joseph Pace was acquitted for the killing due to self-defense, even though it was proven Joseph Harris did not have a gun at the time.<sup>11</sup> Former resident John Malin, whose dad was a good friend to Pace, said the shooting was about one mile east of Westwater town near the cliffs between the two ranches. The Pace-Fuller Ranch was about one mile east and the Harris ranch about one mile south of the town.<sup>12</sup>

A far more serious concern to the cattlemen than rustling was the influx of sheep into the area. They felt the sheep were destroying their range, so they put up more definite land markers in hopes that the shepherds would stay off their lands. Unfortunately for them, many of the herders were Basques who, according to the cattlemen, had little or no regard for boundaries; this combined with their unusual customs and the language barrier made them seem more threatening to the cattlemen. Conflict



Harvey Edward Herbert's home near Bitter Creek was built during the winter of 1917 and 1918. Ed Herbert was deputy sheriff and sheep inspector at Westwater for a number of years. He arrived at Westwater in about 1898 and lived there until he died in 1929. He was E. C. Malin's stepfather. Photo from Wilford Hill files courtesy of Elsa Spaulding Hill.



Ed Herbert at Westwater, with Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad in background. Photo courtesy of Ila B. Reay.

with sheepherders tended to bond the once isolated ranchers in a common cause of protecting the range from foreigners and their land-destroying flocks.

In May 1909, in Garfield County, Colorado, not far from Utah, six sheepmen were captured and tied up while fifteen unidentified cattlemen went into their sheep corral. An onlooker described what followed: "We have been having trouble with the cow punchers here the past few days . . . They tied Rocky (Oscar Stewart of Moab) and Abe (Abe Oregon, Mexican foreman) and four other men down with ropes while they killed about 1,200 or 1,500 of Fon's (S. A. Taylor's) sheep. It was an awful sight. They took axes and clubs and went into a corral and chopped the sheep all to pieces."<sup>13</sup> The slaughter lasted nearly an entire day.

Cattlemen also were suspected of killing a sheep owner two years earlier. Naturally, then, anytime sheep died unusually the blame was placed on the cattlemen. Near Cisco in 1908 one hundred sheep died mysteriously while feeding on the range. Cattlemen were suspected of poisoning the range until Dr. Broadhurst, a veterinarian from Salt Lake City, found that plants on which the sheep fed had an oil root that caused their kidneys to swell up.<sup>14</sup> In the meantime, many sheepherders panicked and there were several shootings, including some amongst themselves.

Fear and harassment did not prevent sheep owners from bringing their livestock into the state, especially since it became more economical to raise sheep than cattle. By 1919, R. A. Tawney of Grand Junction decided to build a sheep shearing plant at Westwater. Sheep shearing plants were already located at Cisco and Thompson, but Westwater was a prime location being so near to the Colorado border and in the middle of grazing lands for sheep that needed shearing every spring before they returned to their summer range in Colorado and other highlands. The sheep fed off the land between Westwater and Green River throughout the winter, competing with the cattle for water holes and grasses.

Tawney's plant consisted of a drying shed with capacity for fifteen hundred sheep, a shearing shed equipped with sixteen machines that could shear twenty-five hundred sheep a day, conveyor belts, a motor house, and a boarding house for the manager,

Charles O. Wells, of Helena, Montana. Some of the equipment used was unique in Utah and had only been used in Wyoming and Montana before Tawney introduced it.<sup>15</sup> His first spring he had reservations to shear fifty-five thousand sheep, and the following year he clipped eighty thousand sheep. Competition arrived in 1921, when two large sheep outfits, August Nichols and Fitzpatrick Brothers, decided to shear their own sheep and built temporary plants south of Westwater at the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad station located at Cottonwood. They sheared the sheep by hand using fifteen shearers. It is unclear whether it was costs, services, overcrowding, or something else that led the sheepmen to begin bypassing Westwater's established facilities in favor of temporary plants or the established facilities at Cisco and Thompson. By 1929, Joe Ocamica purchased the Tawney plant at Westwater, eventually moving it to Cisco. At that location it became part of one of the largest shearing plants in the West. J. W. Hardison tried to reopen a plant at Westwater in 1932, but most of the business had moved to Cisco and Joe Ocamica's plant.

By late winter, 1919, a new problem arose for the sheepmen. An outbreak of scabies infected sheep in several states surrounding Utah and in San Juan County. It was a requirement of the state for any sign of scabies to be reported immediately in order to prevent the disease from spreading to other herds. However, some sheepmen ignored the regulations, and because of their indifference the State Livestock Board mandated the dipping of all sheep entering the state and any others proven to have the disease. Deputy Sheriff H. E. Herbert was appointed as a state sheep inspector and placed in charge of seeing that all sheep in the Westwater region were dipped. He deputized his stepson Elwood C. Malin, Lois Cato, Frank Shafer, and others. Early December 1920 found August Nichols, Fred Burford, and William T. Fitzpatrick, each of whom owned over twenty-five thousand head of sheep, refusing to dip their herds, claiming it would be harmful to their health in winter weather. The owners had been given a certificate by veterinarian Dr. A. P. Drew, who was acting as a deputy for the Colorado Livestock Board and U.S. Bureau of Animal Industry, which they claimed authorized their sheep to enter the state of Utah. Dr. Drew, though, refuted their claim, and evidence showed he had only authorized the selling of the sheep within Colorado.<sup>16</sup>





Westwater Ranch has been one of the highest valued pieces of real estate in Grand County for over one hundred years.

Rumors abounded that Deputy Sheriff Herbert's group showed favoritism toward some of the sheepmen, who were allowed to enter Utah without dipping. This perception was refuted by the courts, though, which ruled against the sheepmen, whose herds had been quarantined, and gave them until February 15, 1921, to get their sheep dipped. Meanwhile, several large sheep outfits had remained in Colorado awaiting the outcome of the trial before moving their sheep across the border. The sheepmen were given boundaries to keep until their sheep were dipped. This seemed satisfactory, but the areas they were given were too limited, and they started to cross over onto cattle ranges and stir up additional problems—until events that took place on February 24, 1921.

Charlie Glass was mostly African American and part Cherokee. He was believed to have been born on an Indian reservation in Oklahoma around 1870. Rumor had it he killed a man there who was responsible for his father's death, then headed west. By the early 1900s he had made his way to Colorado as a cowpuncher. He started in southeastern Colorado and moved

further west in 1909 to work with the S-Cross Ranch out of Grand Junction. The S-Cross ran cattle on Pinon Mesa and around Westwater. By 1917, he was working for Oscar L. Turner near Cisco, Utah, where he became foreman. The large, handsome cowpuncher was considered very loyal to his employers and epitomized the cowboys of his day. He was deeply respected by those who knew him.

The invasion of sheep and sheepmen onto their ranges irritated the cowboys of Glass's day. The cowpunchers may have known they could not do away with the pesky animals and Basque herders, but they wanted to protect what they considered theirs, including the ranges they owned outright or had first worked. The fight over the land raged on as the sheepmen showed little or no respect for the cattlemen's precedence in the region. The problem escalated in the winter of 1921 when William Fitzpatrick's sheep were put under quarantine. He was given boundaries to keep his sheep in until they were dipped for scabies according to a December judgment he received in the Thompson courts.

It was said that although Charlie Glass hated sheep and their herders, he was fairer with them than others might have been under the same conditions. He had broken up several fights between cowpunchers and the Basques that could have been serious; at other times he would sit down with a sheepman and convince him to get back onto his quarantined boundary. Although Glass made idle threats against the sheepmen, they respected him; on the other hand he had little or no respect for them. A story that circulated about Charlie was how one day a deer hunter approached him to find out if there were any taxidermists in the area. Charlie had no idea what a taxidermist was; so after giving it some thought he told the hunter there wasn't any. The hunter, sensing Charlie didn't know what he was talking about, described a taxidermist to him as someone who mounted animals. To this Charlie emphatically replied, "You mean sheepherders."<sup>17</sup> In any case Charlie restrained his passions against the sheepmen while demonstrating his respect for the law.

On February 24, 1921, Felix Jesui stepped too far out of bounds while working for William Fitzpatrick, and was killed for it.<sup>18</sup> Charlie had had several encounters with other Fitzpatrick

herders in the few days leading up to the killing, and they had been warned about keeping within the boundaries set by deputy sheriff and sheep inspector H. E. Herbert of Westwater. Felix Jesui's job was camp mover, but on February 24 he substituted for Eusebis Astegaraga as herder. Jesui apparently was unconcerned about an encounter Eusebis had had with Glass the day before and defiantly herded his sheep up a canyon leading toward Oscar Turner's ranch. They were about a half mile over the boundary when Charlie spotted him and went down to move him back inside his quarantine line. With nobody else around, Glass claimed he approached the lone shepherd and asked him to move his camp. Felix Jesui, who was packing a Winchester and .25 caliber revolver, argued with Glass and stubbornly refused to move. Deciding he was not getting anywhere, Glass told Jesui he would take the matter up with his boss and headed to his horse about twenty-five feet away. Jesui yelled something at him then sent a bullet whizzing past Glass's shoulder. When he attempted a second shot with the Winchester, the gun jammed, so Jesui drew his pistol, firing a couple more shots before Glass could pull his own pistol from a shoulder scabbard beneath his coat and shirt. For a brief moment the men exchanged errant shots; then Jesui took a hit to his head near the right temple and died immediately.

With no witnesses, the available evidence amounted to shots heard by nearby shepherders and cattlemen and shell casings on the ground. Most of the witnesses that were in the vicinity reported hearing about four shots total, one louder than the rest, probably the single rifle shot Glass claimed initiated the action. Upon the ground authorities found three .32 caliber shells near where Glass stood shooting and, after a lengthy search, a single .25 caliber shell matching the shepherd's pistol. No casing was located belonging to the rifle, but a bullet was jammed in its chamber. Fortunately for Glass, evidence bore out that although the casings were not located, Jesui had put a number of .25 caliber bullets in the right hand pocket of his overcoat that same morning and they were missing when his body was examined later. Footprints were examined to make certain they matched the story Glass gave of the event.

Culminating the trial was evidence presented regarding the attitude the shepherders had regarding the ranges and restrictions

to which they were supposed to adhere. William T. Fitzpatrick, who had hired Felix Jesui, was one of four Colorado sheep owners whose flocks were put under quarantine because they refused to dip them for scabies. He had illegally crossed the border with his 25,000 sheep during November for winter grazing and refused to return to Colorado until the courts addressed issues surrounding the forced dippings. Sheep inspector and deputy sheriff H. E. Herbert of Westwater, who established the boundaries for the sheep, became a key witness during the trial, which eventually focused on the Basques hired by Fitzpatrick and their attitudes. Herbert testified of several confrontations with Basques intentionally overstepping their boundaries. One contended he didn't know his directions, then with Winchester in hand proclaimed he would go wherever he wanted. Another sheepherder threatened to bring all his sheep back the next year and "eat out all of the cattlemen's range."

Objections by the prosecution were numerous that Herbert's testimony implied a conspiracy by the sheep owners to knowingly disregard the quarantine boundaries and range rights belonging to the cattlemen. The crowds nearly packed the courtroom daily as the issue became a "contest between the resident stockmen of Grand county and the transient sheepmen of Colorado, who for several years past have driven their herds into Grand county for the winter months and, it is charged, have crowded out the resident stockmen with subsequent heavy losses to the latter."<sup>19</sup> Charlie Glass was acquitted of the murder, and the cattlemen temporarily won the contest.

The Charlie Glass case showed the strong support in Grand County for the cattlemen. After the killing of Felix Jesui the range problems slowed down but did not disappear. Trouble between cowpunchers and sheepmen continued throughout 1921, and Ed Herbert and Lois Cato were called to Cisco to inspect another range problem occurring on the Oscar Turner Ranch. Cattlemen were again complaining that sheepherders were crowding in too close. In May 1921, Greek sheepmen even took over a pond on private property belonging to Quintus Cato near Cisco. They found the pond and started setting up their sheep camp around it. Ralph Cato and his brother-in-law Frank Hickman tried to force them out, but one of the sheepmen threatened Frank that if he tried to get them to move their sheep, "You be dead, and me

in jail.” Deputy sheriff Herbert and Lois Cato again were summoned, and upon their arrival they disarmed the sheepmen and made an agreement allowing them to stay briefly but with a promise that they would leave the area.

Battling over the range came to a head when sometime during the night prior to September 18, 1922, at least two cowboys silently made their way into a sheep camp northwest of Cisco, in the Book Cliffs range. Unobserved, the cowboys captured eleven horses and eight mules that belonged to the Joseph L. Taylor sheep outfit and proceeded to unmercifully drive the small herd over forty miles, where they trapped the animals in a box canyon off East Willow Creek Canyon and then slaughtered them. The brutality of the massacre undercut sympathy for the cattlemen, and volunteers from all over the region offered their assistance to track down the cowboys. Sheriff W. J. Bliss conducted the investigation and reported it to the *Times-Independent* dated September 28, 1922:

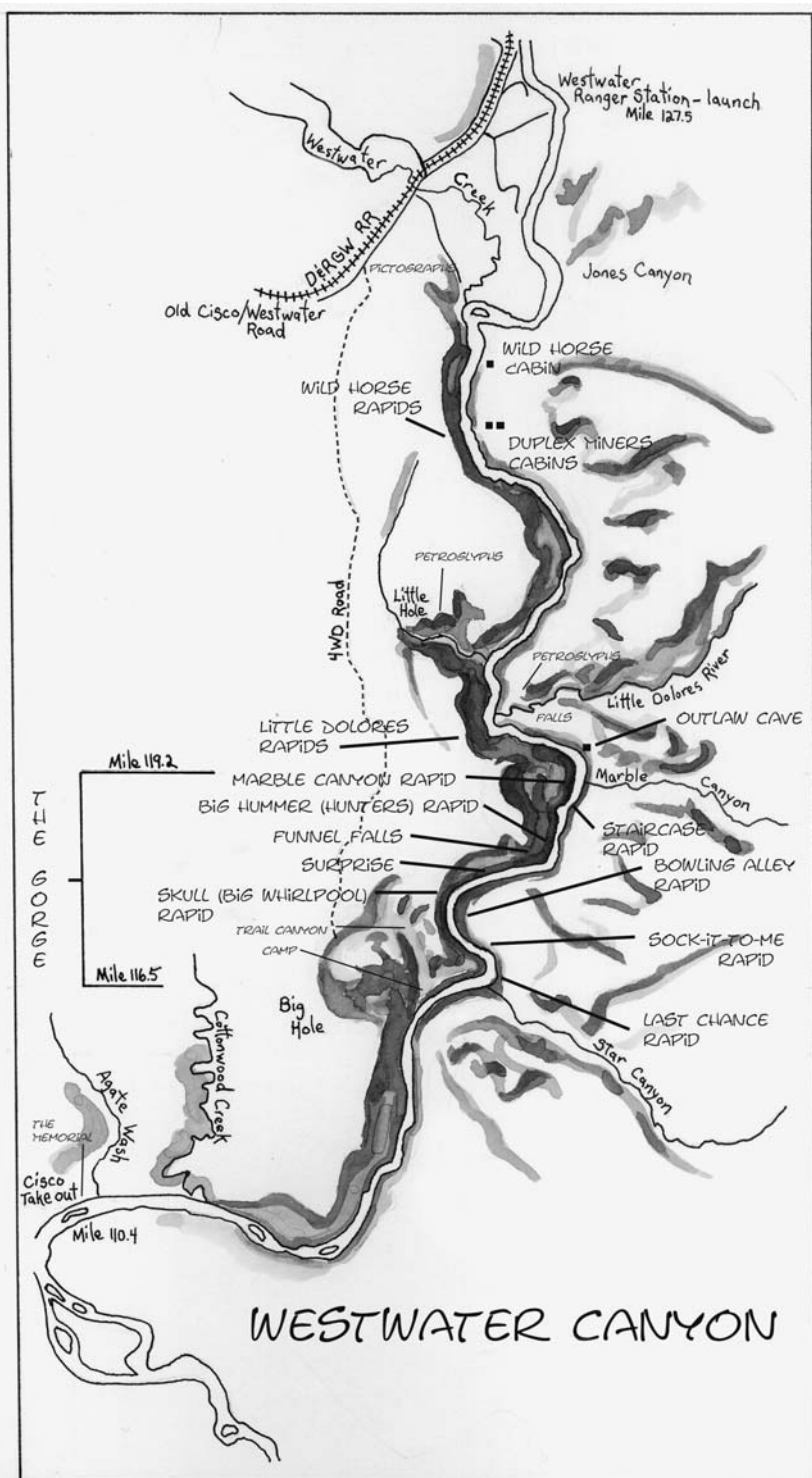
The stock had been driven at a rapid rate for about forty miles, the trail leading across the Book mountains and into the lowlands north of Willow creek. The trail led into a desert country barren of water, and showed that the marauders had a thorough knowledge of the range. The stock were driven directly to the small boxed canyon in which the slaughter took place. A shelf of overhanging rock, possibly twelve feet in height, surrounded the enclosure on three sides and with the thieves stationed on their horses at the entrance, the escape of the helpless animals was impossible. Tracks indicated that the killing of the animals was done by two men. They did not get off their horses to do the shooting, and it is evident that they used revolvers. They were careful not to leave any empty cartridge shells, in order to avoid dropping any incriminating evidence in this manner. The dead animals had the appearance of having been driven to the point of exhaustion, and it is the opinion of the sheriff that the raiders had ridden some of the stolen stock in order to save their own mounts.

After killing the stock, the raiders went to great pains to conceal their back trail. They rode their horses in a zig-zag course, keeping in the grass and on rocks as much as possible to avoid leaving a trail. The sheriff's party had extreme difficulty in tracking the men, but with great care they remained on the trail, which led back to the Book cliff range.

Three cowboys were shortly arrested. Waldo Jones and Carl Squiers were charged with the slaughter, and Charlie Glass was held for collaborating to contain the sheepherders by shooting into their camp while the marauders escaped. It was more than a year before the defendants came to trial. They were acquitted of what was referred to as "range conspiracy." The trial went beyond the slaughter of the horses and mules, even involving the federal government because the issue became one of the cowboys preventing free passage on public lands. Events the day previous to the slaughter apparently sparked the incident, when Joseph Taylor attempted to take his sheep into Willow Creek and Charlie Glass threatened him. Three other cowboys were implicated in the conspiracy charge, which did not hold up due to lack of conclusive evidence. The cowboys had won yet another battle in the courts.

Shortly afterwards stockmen living within the Cisco voting district, including Westwater and Dolores, approved a Fence Law that placed responsibility on existing ranchers to fence their property if they did not want intruders. The law was enacted to provide additional means to protect ranchers' property from conflicts with the transient sheepmen. With a fence in place the ranchers and stockmen could collect for damages done to their property by trespassing sheep.<sup>20</sup>

The sheep industry was thriving, and sheepmen turned to the courts and congressmen to give them equal rights to the land. In 1934 the Taylor Grazing Act provided regulation of public lands that in effect gave sheep such equal access.<sup>21</sup> To the cowboy this marked the end of their reign as they were forced to give up their control of free ranges to the intruding sheepmen. On February 22, 1937, an old cowboy sat playing cards with some sheepmen at Thompson. As the night wore on two of the sheepmen offered to take the old timer to Cisco, where they had heard a larger game was being played. Accepting the offer he jumped in the back of their pickup, and they all sped off. Some claim the two Basques in the truck were cousins of the late Felix Jesui and that the old man, Charlie Glass, the black cowboy, who died that night of a broken neck due to an automobile accident, was set up for a revenge that came almost sixteen years to the date after the defiant sheepman was killed by the hands of the symbolic cowboy.<sup>22</sup>





## Rocks, Dams, and Hideouts

### Entering the Canyon

Not far into Westwater Canyon, just beyond Wild Horse Cabin, is Wild Horse campsite. Not often used because of its proximity to the launch, this camp offers some of the most colorful scenery during the evening and early mornings. Granite outcrops emerge from the water, standing as a gateway into the canyon, and the number of large metamorphic and igneous rock slabs increases along the banks. Beyond the camp, at Wild Horse Rapid, the river bends toward the southeast and short dark cliffs begin to appear. The camp provides beachfront property, with plenty of tent and tarp locations and less tamarisk than elsewhere. Numerous outcrops of granite, schist, and gneiss along the beach provide some privacy, and pockets eroded out of them, as if by an ice cream scoop, offer natural chairs.

Prospecting and mining occurred throughout the area, beginning in the 1880s, and some remnants still exist nearby. Short hikes lead to Wild Horse Cabin upstream and the Duplex Miner's Cabins downstream. Directly behind camp there appear to be the remains of a chimney. This is the most notable location of evidence of human history within the canyon's walls. Once active with placer miners, the area is now silent except for sporadic river runners floating by or the occasional gobbling of recently introduced wild turkeys. This camp is too hot during

midday to appreciate. One must spend the night cradled amongst the granite rock outcrops and watch the shadows on the Wingate sandstone cliffs across the river in the evening, then the wonderful orange hues at dawn when the sun rises from the east. The river splashes serenely through small riffles, creating a calming atmosphere when combined with the show across the river. At night the sky is dark and generally clear, exhibiting an endless vista of stars, planets, and occasional satellites.

From here to the end of the canyon there are four predominant geologic sequences in the rock history. Two sequences dominate the canyon scenery: the darker igneous and metamorphic granite, schist, and gneiss that are 1.7 billion years old. Then strikingly elevated above them are the much younger 200-million-year-old Wingate sandstone cliffs, which rise hundreds of feet above the river. Easy to miss, sandwiched between these dominant strata, is the sloping Chinle formation that is slightly older than the Wingate sandstone. Also, less noticeable, on top, is the youngest formation, Kayenta sandstone. "Slightly" seems like an understatement because these formations represent millions of years of geologic time, though they follow each other sequentially. This cannot be said of the Precambrian rock below them. The unusual marriages of formations referred to as unconformities are gaps of geologic history where strata are inexplicably missing.

The metamorphic and igneous rocks are Precambrian, the oldest rock group on the planet, in some places dating back to the earth's formation approximately 4.66 billion years ago. Although the Precambrian rocks in Westwater Canyon are not that old, the mere fact of their Precambrian age is impressive enough. The granite, schist, and gneiss can be difficult to distinguish. A Tag-A-Long company boat-gal recently taught me a mnemonic for them: "It's not gneiss [nice] to take your schist for granite." Until 1998, there had been little specific analysis of the Precambrian rock within Westwater; then in October of that year, during a research trip through the canyon that was organized by John Weisheit of the Colorado Plateau River Guides (CPRG) of Moab, Wil Bussard and Tamsin McCormick gathered sufficient samples to begin the process of identification. Wil Bussard wrote of the Precambrian rocks along this course in the winter 1999 issue of *Confluence*.<sup>1</sup> He described to me further the metamorphism related to Westwater Canyon:

Granite is an intrusive igneous rock that forms when magma cools beneath the Earth's surface. Over a billion years ago magma came into the crust and solidified at depth in the area that is now Westwater Canyon. The large crystal sizes and consistent alignment of these crystals at Black Rocks and Miners Cabin tell us that this magma cooled slowly and at depth in an actively compressing environment. The metamorphic rock into which the granite was emplaced has mineral assemblages consistent with burial metamorphism of about 10–20 kilometers. So, the rocks we now see in Westwater Canyon are those which were deep in the continental crust at the time of crystallization. Activity on the surface at this time is not recorded here, as it has been eroded away and lost in the Great Unconformity, the missing gap in geologic time of roughly 1.5 billion years between the Precambrian rocks and the overlying Triassic Chinle formation/Wingate Sandstone. It is reasonable to infer that surface activity here in the Precambrian was similar to mountain belts at continental margins of today, i.e. the present day Sierra Nevada/Coast ranges of California or perhaps the Andes of South America; with sedimentary and volcanic rocks being produced and deposited.<sup>2</sup>

The metamorphic rocks of Westwater are a remnant of the Uncompahgre uplift that once was part of a greater mountain range than the current Rocky Mountains. "The Ancestral Rockies arose, beginning about 300 million years ago and stretched from southeast Oklahoma to Salt Lake City. The Uncompahgre uplift pushed up the crust at Westwater and adjacent areas, creating the Paradox Basin to the southwest."<sup>3</sup> Seas, deserts, sand dunes, and shorelines were all a part of the geology that afterwards put piles of sandstone, shale, and limestone onto the Precambrian base. And just as it took millions of years to pile them on, it also took millions of years for nature to dig through time and expose the schist below. These metamorphic rocks would still be thousands of feet underground had it not been for erosion, primarily by the Colorado River. Wherever these rocks are, the river will be narrow due to their hardness. The Wingate Sandstone erodes easily, but not this Precambrian rock.

The Chinle formation dates from between 245 and 208 million years ago—thus the geological history gap of about one and a half billion years in Westwater Canyon. The often unnoticed Chinle formation is the talus slope at the base of the Wingate cliffs and formed during the Triassic period, which began about

225 million years ago and ended 35 million years later. The Chinle rock is a shale from a time when the area consisted of level flood plains, meandering streams, or shallow lakes. Its gray color came from impregnation by volcanic ash.

Following the Chinle formation the geologic history adheres to a continuous sequence with the Wingate sandstone followed by the Kayenta sandstone. The dominating Wingate formed near the end of the Triassic period. Unlike the tropical visions we have of this age spurred on by movies like *Jurassic Park*, sand dunes similar to those of the Sahara Desert hardened through time into the sandstone of this region. Sandstone is a softer rock, and the river, rain, ice, and, to a lesser degree, winds have shaped it for millions of years. When not protected, sandstone erodes quite easily and forms domes, fins, and occasional arches. Such formations are located in Westwater Canyon. Less noticeable, the Kayenta sandstone has been described as the glue that holds the more fragile Wingate sandstone together.

High above Wild Horse Rapid, the first rapid encountered, a form like a wild horse's head can be seen in the face of the cliff. Whether the rapid was named after the formation or because wild horses once roamed the area is anybody's guess.

Immediately beyond Wild Horse Rapid, walls of schist and gneiss shoot up over one hundred feet straight out of the water, suddenly imprisoning boaters in a deep narrow canyon. This stretch is similar to the narrow gorge further downstream, only it is somewhat tranquil and relaxing here. In normal river conditions, dead timber can be seen in this area thirty, forty, or fifty feet above, reminders of higher waters. The debris scattered above has caused many recreational boaters throughout the years to speculate how such incomprehensible flooding would affect the narrow canyon.

For many years Skull Rapid and the other continuous rapids were thought to be unrunnable above 30,000 cfs, let alone if flooding reached the heights where the debris accumulated. Most boaters hypothesized that the Colorado River bottlenecking through the narrow gorge would be like a toilet flushing. Then in 1983 and 1984 several boaters made pioneering high-water trips through Westwater and experienced what nobody previously had. A group of rafters that included the rangers at Westwater rode 60,500 cfs of river speeding through Westwater on June 27, 1983.

Instead of enormous holes and huge rollers, whirlpools sucking down on the rafts were the river's most frightening aspect.

Since 1950 when boating Westwater began gradually to increase in popularity, high water in most years averaged around 20,000 cfs, and only a few years exceeded 40,000 cfs, the highest being 63,400 cfs on June 10, 1957.<sup>4</sup> There is no record of anybody boating Westwater during 1957, and most of the recorded runs of Westwater prior to the 1970s were on low water. Many had thought 1983 was exceptional, but the following year on May 27, 1984, the Colorado River surged even higher through the canyon, with 69,500 cfs of water. All thought of the canyon being unrunnable at such levels was dispelled. Even though we have nearly experienced 70,000 cfs, one can only imagine what the reported highest level of 125,000 cfs looked like in 1884 when it flushed through the narrow canyon.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, prior to the summer of 2002, an extremely low water level hadn't been seen since April 19, 1977, when the river ran at 1,100 cfs. That year water conservation was requested of everyone along the Colorado River early in the spring, yet as dry as that was, it was not the lowest recorded level. That occurred on June 21, 1934, when the flow reached a low of 640 cfs.<sup>6</sup>

We are fortunate the canyon is available for us to enjoy at all. As early as 1902, speculators envisioned the canyon producing electricity for an "electric road" to transport ores between Moab and Cisco. The *Grand Valley Times* described the proposal:

Cisco is located in Grand county, near the Colorado border on the main line of the Rio Grande, and if the ore could be transported to that point the mine owners would have easy sailing. Mr. Earnshaw says the scheme is not only feasible, but he believes that it would be a paying line. The cost of the road would be about \$1,000,000. The plan is to use the water in the canyon of the Grand river near Cisco, where the water has a drop of about 1,000 feet in five miles. It is estimated that a line fifty miles long would reach the principal deposits in the camp.<sup>7</sup>

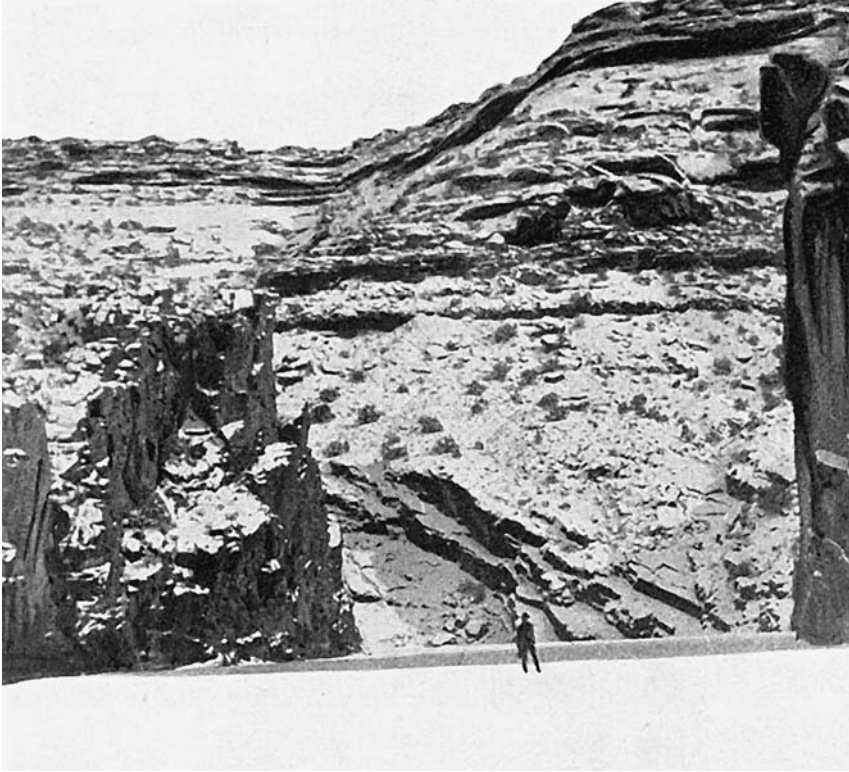
J. N. Corbin, representing the Mt. Tamasaski Mining Company near Moab, invested considerable time researching the feasibility of the electric road and lobbying for it during trips to Salt Lake City and Denver. Perhaps his visit to Denver prompted the Bureau of Reclamation to get involved in seeking an additional



Inseparable Owen Malin and his stepbrother Jesse Hunt in front of 1924 Erskine, in approximately 1932. Photo courtesy of Dorothy Vario.



Jesse Hunt riding the hills above Westwater. Photo courtesy of Ila B. Reay.



“Dam site on Grand River 6 miles below Westwater, Utah.” Notice man standing in the middle of the frozen river. U.S. Congress, U.S. Geological Survey, Reclamation Service, 2d report, 1903, 58th Congress, 2d session, 1903–1904, H. Doc. 57, no. 44.

use of the water running through Westwater Canyon. The headlines of the *Grand Valley Times* dated February 6, 1903, read: “The Government to Utilize the Great Water Power at Westwater.” A dam would not only provide electric power, it would store water for irrigating arid eastern Utah and western Colorado lands. Engineer Matthes was described as “very jubilant” about the prospect. A lengthy canal would parallel the Book Cliffs and run east to the Grand River Valley in Colorado. A pumping plant would be built in the vicinity of West Salt Creek, obtain its electrical power from the proposed Westwater Dam, and elevate Grand River water to the canal. Once in the gravity canal the water would return to Colorado and primarily irrigate the Grand Valley.



Originally a proposed dam site was described as “a narrow place in the canyon about 2 miles below Westwater in the NE. 1/4 sec. 27, T. 20 S., R. 25 E., where the width between walls at the low-water line is 100 feet.”<sup>8</sup> This would be in the proximity of Mile 123 on the Belknap *Canyonlands River Guide*. Further studies rejected the original location, citing backwaters during high water that would flood the Westwater valley, affecting the town and railroad. After further consideration the survey concluded a better location was available at approximately mile 117, near Bowling Alley and Skull Rapid. Fortunately the dam was never built.<sup>9</sup>

Some of the terrain south of the Colorado River may not have been surveyed until the Bureau of Reclamation investigated the Westwater dam sites, judging by an 1894 township survey.<sup>10</sup> In 1875 and 1876 survey crews working for Ferdinand V. Hayden had been in the vicinity of Westwater, and their reports suggest they did considerable survey work on the outskirts of Westwater Canyon but did not enter it.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the government recognized at the time of the dam survey that the region’s geography was incomplete because in 1911 they sent Raymond Seitz to Westwater. By wagon, Seitz surveyed Westwater Canyon, making his way into its interior at Big Hole. Later in 1929, renowned geologist Charles B. Hunt made his survey debut, joining a team of geologists led by C. H. Dane who surveyed much of the Grand County region.<sup>12</sup>

Downstream from Wild Horse Rapid, pyramidal buttes can periodically be seen above the granite and gneiss walls. The Wingate cliffs east of the river don’t seem as intimidating as at the beginning of the canyon. They are more distant, and from this perspective one can imagine the base of them having once been shorelines and inlets to a great sea. Reflecting on the geology can remind you of what man can do to it. Recently a modern miner scarred the land at the top of the point just down canyon from Wild Horse Rapid. Yet man’s footprints in the canyon are more tolerable when they are accepted as a part of its history. A miner’s cabin, Indian petroglyphs, and Counterfeit Cave add to the romance of the region, but seeing a backhoe, a road, and trailers in this region is a distasteful reminder of how easily what is left of wilderness here can be threatened. Like tourists carving their initials over ancient petroglyphs, the act of defiling what

now represents natural and historical conditions is not acceptable. In fact the new mining disgusted enough people that lawsuits were filed, and in March 1999 Ron and Ray Pene were ordered by the U.S. Department of Justice to take their equipment out of the canyon. The Penes' mining claim surprised everybody who thought the canyon was protected from these activities because it was being considered for wilderness protection by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1975.

After Cougar Bar the higher geologic formations reveal themselves again. For a brief moment the river opens up into a small pond; then it suddenly and briefly narrows into the tightest section of the canyon to this point. Here the flowing river seems to rarely see the sun. At least that is the perception when most boaters pass this area in the morning shade. The narrow canyon then opens up again and high above stands a lone pinnacle attached to the tall Wingate cliffs. The formation was referred to as Smokey Bear Point on Les Jones's once popular scroll river map. This marks where Little Hole enters the river from the west. Little Hole is one of the two rincons in Westwater that provide access in or out of the inner canyon.

Little Hole seems secluded because it is well into the middle of Westwater Canyon. Above, a dusty road on the west rim of the canyon overlooks Little Hole then continues on to Trail Canyon and Big Hole. From the Little Hole overlook there is a fairly simple hike into the canyon and down to the river. Perhaps this secluded access made Little Hole and Big Hole logical areas for bootleggers during the Prohibition that lasted in Utah from 1917 until 1933. Utah passed its own dry law almost three years before the Eighteenth Amendment was passed by Congress prohibiting the consumption of alcohol nationwide. With alcohol being unavailable to purchase, some consumers turned to making their own booze in their homes or near their property. Many old-timers claim everyone seemed to have a recipe for making a brew and kept a hidden jug around the house, although it was illegal to do so. But producing their own alcohol was a problem since law enforcement was directed toward the producer rather than consumers. Producers invented ingenious ways to conceal their illicit operations, and some in rural areas found remote locations where they were less likely to be discovered. The canyon lands provided prime locations because "the topography actually encouraged development of the



Barrel rings found at Big Hole help substantiate stories that a large bootlegging operation existed there during Prohibition.

illegal industry. In the rugged terrain of southeastern Utah, ranches and river washes were favorite locations for operating stills and concealing equipment and supplies.”<sup>13</sup>

Several stills were located in the Westwater region, including a well-hidden one on an island near Bitter Creek, where Elwood C. Malin and Frank Moore set up shop. Officers had to borrow a boat and row out to the island, where they found the still “cleverly concealed in a dugout in some thick brush.”<sup>14</sup> Another small still was located “south of the Colorado river some ten miles from Cisco, and . . . housed in a ‘dugout’ on the side of a wash.”<sup>15</sup> Some moonshiners were not so clever, though. Santo Muos set up shop in a section house, just up the road from deputy sheriff H. E. Herbert’s home. He received a speedy trial, being arrested at 7:30 A.M. and convicted at 5:30 P.M. that same evening.<sup>16</sup> Although always on the lookout, the federal government did not generally pursue the little producers, but the distributors who made their livelihood from bootlegging.

On March 26, 1929, Sheriff O. C. Miller of Moab, with his deputies R. D. Westwood and Charles Cato, drove to Westwater

on a tip that a still was being run about three miles above town. They discovered a still that had the capacity to produce about ten gallons of booze a day and also found three gallons of liquor already made. They suspected the illegal producer knew about the raid because he was nowhere to be found. After destroying the still and barrels, the officers headed back to Moab using the old Cisco road that paralleled the railroad tracks. On a hunch the officers stopped at the head of Agate Wash, which drains into the Colorado River about a mile above the old Cisco pumphouse.

Climbing to the top of the hill they observed a man running away from them. At the bottom of the wash they could see a dugout, which they investigated, discovering a large still with a capacity of 380 gallons that was in operation when they arrived. Near it at least twenty five-gallon barrels of liquor had been filled and were ready to move. Two trucks were also discovered near the site, one bearing a Colorado license plate. The still had recently been built, and the officers suspected it was intended to supply Colorado markets. The *Times-Independent* article read, "Probably the biggest booze haul ever conducted in Grand county occurred in the Cisco-Westwater section Monday."<sup>17</sup>

For men who wanted to avoid the law, what better place was there to establish a still than deep in the canyon of Westwater, where there was access to water and isolation? According to long-time Westwater resident John Malin, the largest bust occurred in Big Hole and Little Hole, where a one-thousand-gallon still was uncovered. Malin said federal agents did not let the county sheriff know about their tip because they suspected leaks were coming out of the sheriff's department. Not long before the federal agents discovered the still at Little Hole, John and his older brother Owen visited it when nobody was around. He wrote: "Owen and I were down to it. A bear had sampled most of the vats [and] even took a bath in one. We followed the bear for about 100 yards[;] the mash was like a laxative for the bear. He left a pile of feces about every 50'. I imagine he had a hang over for some time after."<sup>18</sup>

Owen Malin was assigned by federal agents to be a rim guard over the Big and Little Hole canyons and watch for anyone coming into or leaving the area. When federal agents entered Big Hole canyon they found six wooden vats holding about five hundred

gallons of mash. The booze was being transported to Denver using a Lincoln car with special tanks strung underneath it. The still located at Little Hole had the capacity of one thousand gallons. The federal agents chopped the stills into small pieces. John claimed there was a lot of booze making in the Big and Little Hole area. Today the only evidence of a bootlegging operation is at Big Hole, where barrel rings were discovered beneath a large boulder in 1998. Without evidence or a better description of the bootlegging activities in Little Hole, it is difficult to ascertain where in the canyon the stills were located. Natural springs that have since dried up within Little Hole and elsewhere throughout the region provided water for the bootleggers. After the federal agents had left the area, Owen Malin and his stepbrother Jesse Hunt returned to the destroyed stills, gathered the copper that was left behind, and sold it.

Although the copper located at the stills was not produced at Little Hole, there were several copper claims in the canyon. In 1903 Edmans and Hommell had the first known copper claim near Westwater. They planned to develop their property near the Little Dolores by forming a stock company. Little else was said though until November 1917 when a party of men from Glade Park reportedly spent a week at Little Hole inspecting the condition of the "old copper mine." Years later Owen Malin asserted in an interview that these fellows from Colorado had jumped the claim at Little Hole, which had been held by a black man possibly named Luke. Luke was visiting the Malin home the evening he heard about the party going to Little Hole, and he left immediately to get his mine back. Owen's father, Elwood C. Malin, decided to warn the party about Luke. Owen said:

Dad had saddled up a horse and took out over the hill and went down the other way to the trail through Little Hole and got two of the guys out of there. Well Luke went down the backside of the river. It took him longer and he just shot the heck out of those tents and that camp they had, but dad had gotten them out on top and they went back to Grand Junction and never did come back. Well Luke hung around here for about a month waiting for them to come back. He was going to kill em. He sure shot the heck out of their camp. If they'd a bin in there he'd a probably gotten them with fire like that. They just built a big fire then pulled out. Course that, the fire, kept him busy because he thought they were still there.<sup>19</sup>

Today almost all sign of man's history within Little Hole is gone, and all that remains are the Fremont Indian petroglyphs and the slight imprint of a corral or small dugout. No direct evidence of mining could be detected during a couple of brief canyon explorations that I made with John Weisheit in 1998 and 2000. Geologist Wil Bussard accompanied us on both trips and did not find any evidence of copper, guessing that possibly "some of the green color in the Chinle Formation" confused the miners.<sup>20</sup> In any event we do know the vats for moonshine were completely destroyed by federal agents and Owen Malin and Jesse Hunt took all of the copper from the still to town and cashed in on it.

After passing Little Hole the river turns south and the Little Dolores enters the river from the east. Little Dolores is Westwater's mini-paradise in the desert. Although not nearly as magnificent as Vasey's Paradise or Elves Chasm in the Grand Canyon, it still holds its own. The tamarisk on the upstream shore is dense but clustered, with paths running through it and ending in many bedding areas. Although the mosquitoes it attracts are a detraction, the tamarisk at this location provides one of the few shelters within the canyon. The area is an exception since tamarisk is the most despised plant along the Colorado and Green Rivers. Introduced sometime around the turn of the century, a native to Asia and southwestern Europe, this bushlike plant has overrun many shores and beaches. It can grow so dense that it smothers other plant life, absorbing tremendous amounts of water to survive. At the landing a couple of large openings provide central locations for camp kitchens.

A short hike up the Little Dolores leads to a small waterfall, which generally drops little more than a trickle into a pool below. During storms and spring runoff though it becomes a muddy river that surges through the small gap at the top on its way to the Colorado River. The pool has been a popular swimming hole and an opportunity for much-needed baths. However, it is not a good source of drinking water because of the cattle that range in the area upstream.

Above the falls at the base of the narrow butte that clearly identifies the passage of the Little Dolores through the Wingate sandstone are a few petroglyphs that could be Fremont and Ute. In 1956, there was a significant archeological discovery at Luster Cave upstream on the Little Dolores River near the Utah border. Several

ranchers around the turn of the century grazed their cattle in this area during the winter, then moved them southeast to Pinon Mesa, Colorado for the summer. Although the area is hot and looks desolate, former cattlemen say the grass was higher and healthier for cattle than it is now. The consensus from the old-timers is that climatic changes have for nearly a half century diminished the suitability of the land for grazing. Ranchers further up Little Dolores River commuted to the town of Westwater. Prior to the turn of the century there were also mining activities in the area.

Little Dolores Rapid is the first formidable rapid in the canyon and can be stubborn. Try to get the most out of it and you sometimes pay with a few round trips in the eddy along the western shore. Little Dolores consists of three parts. The upper and middle parts of the rapid offer nice roller waves in higher water levels. The lower end of the rapid is generally small with some sharp rocks in the center. While boating the lower rapid, your attention soon focuses on a small cave further downstream on the river's left bank. Outlaw Cave is about fifty feet above the river, and although it has been there since before the turn of the century, it was not always noticed before an explosion of river runners left a well-marked trail up to it.

Everyone who visits Westwater discovers Outlaw Cave anew. Whether you marvel at the double beds, the stove, or the woman's old shoe, the general remoteness of the cave elicits a sense of the old West. Truly a mystery, the history of Outlaw Cave may never be entirely known. Holiday River Expeditions owner Dee Holladay remembers that Ray Rose told him the first story he heard about who lived at the cave. Rose leased his ranch near Cisco from Perry Olsen of Grand Junction. He said that two outlaws occupied the cave at the turn of the century, and the original homesteaders of the Rose/Olsen ranch periodically took supplies in to them, even in cold winter months when temperatures dropped well below zero.

Charles H. Hallett originally homesteaded the ranch referred to in Belknap's *Canyonlands River Guide* as Rose Ranch. Hallett first entered the region in 1892 and homesteaded a piece of land on Westwater Creek near the head of Westwater Canyon. As told earlier, in 1894 Hallett was brought up on charges of murdering Royal Grant in a land dispute and was acquitted later that same



year. By 1897 he had sold his Westwater property, and sometime before 1910 his family moved to a ranch near the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad pumphouse at Cisco. Dee was told that Charles Hallett or his sons at times during the winter would cross the river on ice skates to get to the cave; another route commonly known by the old-timers was through Little Hole. The two outlaws supposedly were brothers who robbed a bank in Vernal, Utah. One of them had been wounded. They came back to the cave, and before long the wounded brother died and was buried about a half mile further downstream.

Perhaps this story has been corrupted to some degree as individuals over a century have retold it. Was it a Vernal robbery? Did a brother really die? Is that truly a grave in Marble Canyon? A possible answer to some of the questions may come from the *Grand Valley Sentinel* of July 18, 1891, which told a story of the murder of rancher Sam Jones at West Creek in Colorado. Jones was a ranch partner with John L. Campbell in Unaweep Canyon. On May 19, 1885, he left the ranch to travel to Silverton, Colorado, to collect several thousand dollars from a suit he filed against someone owing him money. When he did not show up in Silverton suspicions arose that foul play was involved. Eventually Jones's body was located and Campbell was implicated. Campbell was convicted and sentenced to thirty-three years at the state penitentiary at Canon City, Colorado. The twenty-three-year-old Campbell pleaded innocent.

The cowboy who most vehemently accused Campbell was Ira Smith, who discovered Jones's vest with three bullet holes and saw where the body had been dragged to a point overlooking a precipice in the West Creek area and dumped. A few years later, Ira and his brother Bob "with the aid of three embryo Black Barts . . . held up and robbed a Rio Grande mail and express train one night near a station ten miles east of Grand Junction. Their booty was small, but they very cleverly made their escape in a boat, ready to hand all provisioned for a voyage, sailing down the Gunnison river, thence by the Grand to the Utah line. Some weeks after they were arrested while in that territory by Sheriff Cramer, of this county."<sup>21</sup>

While in the Arapahoe County Jail in Denver, the Smith brothers met and befriended Newt Vorce, another felon.

Eventually Vorce was sent to Canon City, Colorado, where Campbell was serving time. While there Vorce confided that Bob Smith had all but confessed to the murder of Sam Jones. The Smith brothers were privy to enough information surrounding the murder to convince the Canon City warden to have the case reevaluated in 1891. The evidence was still not enough to release Campbell, but he eventually was pardoned and released on a technicality on July 4, 1896. It is uncertain how far on the Grand (Colorado) River the brothers went into Utah. Perhaps they made it to Outlaw Cave and are the first recorded boaters through Westwater.<sup>22</sup> In 1905, another pair of outlaw brothers escaped the law in the Dolores Triangle region near the Colorado border. Bill and Bob Steele were wanted in Utah and Colorado for stealing horses. The brothers were observed from across the Dolores River by Sheriff Andrew Somerville and his posse, who shot at the escaping men.<sup>23</sup>

Another story that has circulated is that the occupants of Outlaw Cave were from Grand Junction and were horse thieves. They would herd stolen horses into the area, keeping them close to the river where they would not be discovered, then leave again when they felt they were safe. On July 18, 1888, the *Grand Junction News* reported a gang of horse thieves near the Utah border. The thieves had an extensive operation and had stolen twenty-one horses in the area of Grand Junction. The sheriff had followed them but did not continue into Utah, where, it was reported, "They stand a good show of getting away into a part of Utah Territory that is comparatively unknown, and where it is considered it would be extremely dangerous to follow them unless by a large posse."<sup>24</sup>

Wild horses were known to roam southeast of Westwater across the river. John Malin remembered an old trapper who lived at Outlaw Cave in the early 1930s. He said the old-timer used to trap wild horse ponies for their meat. He kept them cool by lowering them into the river. John and his sister remembered visiting the old trapper and having steaks—unusual steaks—with him once.<sup>25</sup> (Incidentally, Les Jones, a long-time river runner, said a former, less common name for Skull Rapid was "Dead Horse Rapid.") This trapper probably was not the first resident of the cave, though.

The most important information on earlier occupants came from former area ranchers Roscoe C. Hallett and Elwood C. Malin. In 1933, after successfully navigating Westwater Canyon, Harold H. Leich stopped at Cisco pumphouse, where he met Roscoe Hallett. Born in 1891, Roscoe was a baby when his parents Charles H. and Chloe A. Hallett came into the region. During his life he had lived at both ends of Westwater Canyon and assisted with a government survey through the canyon, qualifying him as one of the better sources of information that we have.<sup>26</sup> Among other questions, Leich asked Roscoe about the “old mine tunnel” he saw in the middle of the canyon. Hallett claimed the “hole had been dug back in the 60’s or 70’s & was used in the 80’s by a gang of Spanish counterfeiters.”<sup>27</sup>

Additional information about Outlaw Cave came in 1956, when Les Jones and a party of boaters informed Moab sheriff John Stocks of a skeleton they had discovered in the canyon. Stocks secured the help of Moab resident Jimmy Walker to help him locate the skeleton. Jimmy had been to Westwater once before and was familiar with Little Hole as an entrance into the heart of the canyon. They packed a canoe down the canyon, crossing the river to the east, where they began their search. The following news proved to be more exciting than the skeleton story that prompted the search: “Stocks and his companions found a hidden cave in the wild country into which they had extended the hunt, and uncovered an old camp. A letter—one seeking the promotion of a mine, and dated in 1903—was the only clue, and time had made it impossible to read the name on the letter.”<sup>28</sup> Jimmy Walker recalled, “The letter was between two parties, one back East and the other at Westwater. They were apparently setting up a hustle to promote the location as a gold deal. The letter was telling the man at Westwater to pick up a guy at Thompson and to show him certain things, but not to show him others.”<sup>29</sup>

In 1950, several University of Utah students rediscovered the cave and also found “Some letters left in the camp were post-marked 1903, indicating that the camp had been undisturbed for nearly 50 years. Contents of the letters indicated that the occupants of the old camp were prospectors.”<sup>30</sup>

Former Westwater resident Elwood C. Malin independently supported both Roscoe Hallett’s and Jimmy Walker’s stories when



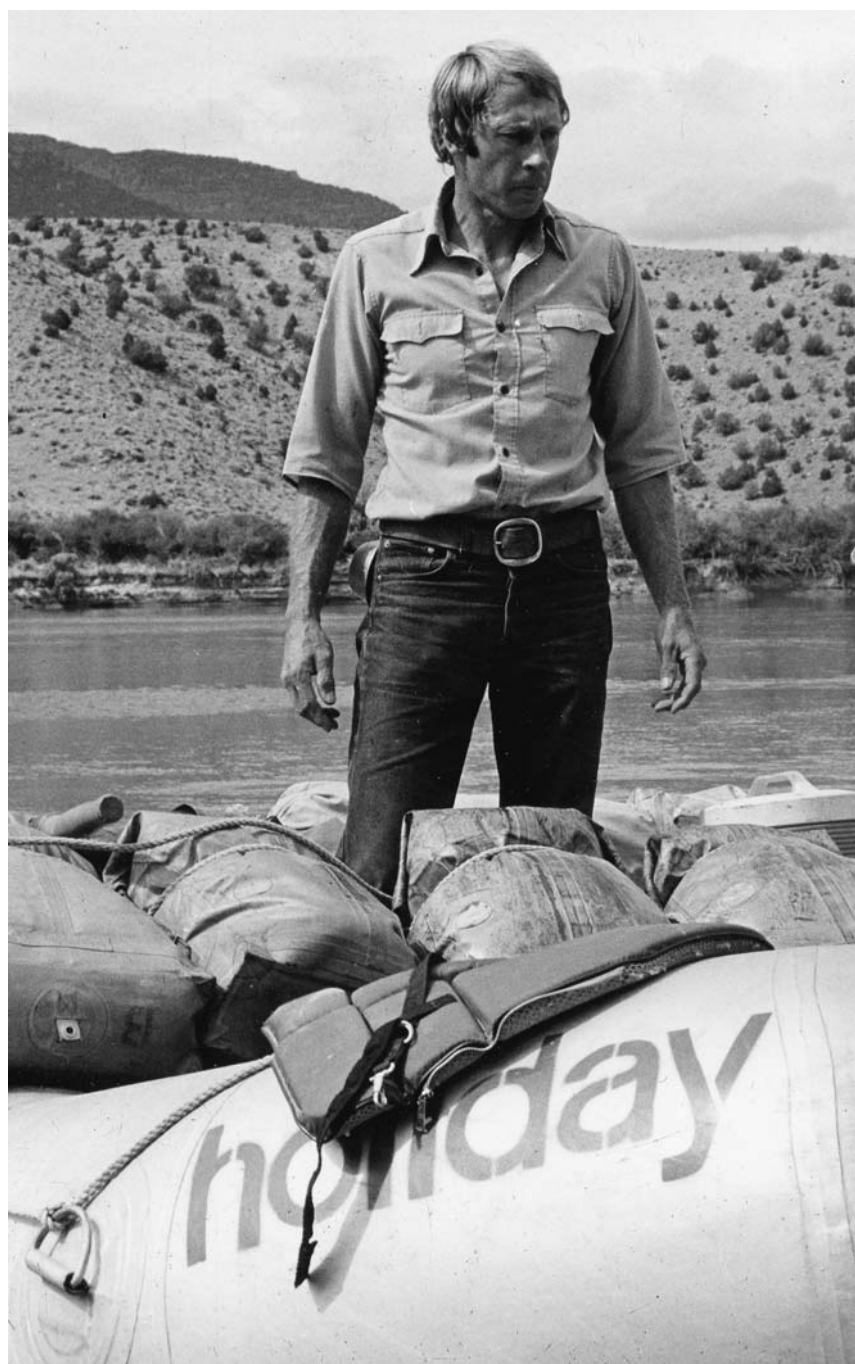
Outlaw Cave (above and facing page) may have been used as early as the 1860s or 1870s. Residents at Westwater named it Counterfeit Cave because bogus money was produced there before the turn of the century.





Dee Holladay at Outlaw Cave. Dee has been instrumental in trying to protect and study Westwater since he first ran the canyon in 1965. Before the BLM began managing the canyon, a sign prepared by his boatman Kim Crumbo was placed in Outlaw Cave asking visitors to protect it. Photo by John Clark, from Holiday River Expeditions, courtesy of Dee Holladay.

(Facing page) Dee Holladay founded Holiday River Expeditions and became one of the original commercial outfitters running Westwater Canyon in 1966. Photo from Holiday River Expeditions, courtesy of Dee Holladay.





he wrote to the Moab *Times-Independent* from his home in Los Angeles. Supporting Roscoe Hallett, he referred to the site as "Counterfeit Cave." The *Times-Independent* dated May 24, 1956, reported the contents of Malin's letter:

[The] first time he came to Westwater in 1904 he was down at the cave and was told a band had been using the place for making bogus money. The cave then was occupied by an old man by the name of John Warren.

There was a little store and post office on the Westwater ranch, and run by a widow woman [Louise R. Hess]. Warren carried the mail from the post office to the depot once each day. He carried the mail out at 9 a.m. and bring them mail back from the depot, then get in a boat, cross the river and walk down to the Counterfeit cave and prospect. He would stay overnight in the cave and return the next morning.

For his chore of carrying the mail, he received \$15 per month and lived on this income for five years. He was from New York. He also had a cabin on the river bank, close to where the big ranch pump house is now, but closer to the bank which has since washed away.

When Malin first went to the cave, there was a little iron cook stove, a table, two cedar pole bunks, two chairs and a makeshift cupboard, a few old dishes and a couple of frying pans.

The widow who had been operating the store and post office married a man named Ed Bowdle and her new husband began to carry the mail. Deprived of his mail route income, Warren went to Grand Junction, bought a new suit of clothes, hat, shoes and a big suitcase and pulled stakes.

That was the last they ever heard of him. The general opinion at the time was that he had been panning gold during those five years at Westwater, and that was where he got the money to leave on.

In the winter of 1905 Malin lived in a tent about 40 yards from the old John Warren cabin. It was while looking around the cabin that Malin discovered Warren was also an assayer, and saw lots of equipment in his cabin.<sup>31</sup>

Conceivably John Warren may have been the goat who swallowed the bait about the cave's mining potential.<sup>32</sup> Louise R. Hess was made postmistress at Westwater on May 9, 1903, and continued at that position until 1909, when J. G. Imhoff succeeded her. All of the known letters found in the cave were dated 1903, and some of them concerned two men trying to swindle a third party from back east into purchasing the cave or a mine near its location.

One source indicated the cave resident receiving the mail was from Salt Lake City, Utah. Elwood Malin came to Westwater in 1904 but did not mention how long Warren had been a resident of the area. He did correctly identify the year Warren left Westwater after losing his job to E. G. Bowdle, who married the postmistress, Louise R. Hess, on October 15, 1905. John Warren was not listed on the 1900 U.S. Census for Westwater.

Additionally,

Malin recalled that in about 1908 or 1910, two men came to Westwater, bought a boat from Ed Herbert, and went down the river on a prospecting trip. One of them was a one armed man named Rich McGrooder but Malin did not recall the name of the other.

They lived in counterfeit cave for some time. They tried to interest an eastern outfit to put up money for mining equipment, and shipped 50 pounds of black sand to the company in New York. But the offer was rejected by the New Yorkers.

Disappointed, the pair pulled out. They left bedding and supplies in the cave, and was going to come back, but they never did.<sup>33</sup>

The *Times-Independent* dated January 3, 1919, printed the following report from Westwater: "R. W. McGruder, with Mssrs. Cook and Applegate, came in from Grand Junction the last of the week and are camping in Granite [Westwater] canyon and inspecting the placer claims, with a view to future development."

There are no more detailed accounts of the cave than those Hallett and Malin provided. Still, they gave important information about the cave's history while simultaneously raising new questions, such as who would have been in the area in the 1860s and 1870s in the middle of Indian territory, and why would counterfeiters use such a remote place? This is an intriguing part of the cave's history that likely is lost forever.

Not only is a part of Outlaw Cave's history lost but its contents have also slowly disappeared or been irreparably damaged. In May 1950, Paul Geerlings described the contents of the cave, "two beds, cooking utensils and supplies were intact, although badly weathered." He also said that "an open box of cornmeal on the table was still in good condition," leaving the group with the impression the cave had been untouched for nearly fifty years.<sup>34</sup> Six years later Moab sheriff John Stocks and Jimmy Walker rediscovered the cave and continued with a description of the contents:

“The occupants of this ancient camp evidently either left hurriedly, or intended to come back, and never made it. Why? Your guess would be as good as anyone’s. But those who had lived in this cave left behind them their bedding, cooking utensils and even an old stove. Time had rotted away the bedding, and spread rust over the other items.”<sup>35</sup>

Even as late as 1962 the contents had remained undisturbed and respected by those who rediscovered the cave. Famous kayaker Walter Kirschbaum wrote in a letter to John L. J. Hart:

To me, the most fascinating occurrence on that trip [August 16] was our discovery of that cave about one third down the way on the left, about 30 feet above water level which was inhabited in the first decade of this century by a man from Salt Lake, whose name I forget, but where we found mail addressed to him just ‘Westwater, Utah,’ and a chair fabulously carved and constructed from nothing but driftwood, two beds, one in each corner, etc., etc. I have no doubt you are familiar with this. I made sure that no one, on both of our trips disturbed anything there. It’s a great, to say the least, a great witness of some of the people before us in this kind of country. Actually, knowing a certain sort of people that are more egotistic than respectful, I think someone should take steps to preserve this landmark.<sup>36</sup>

Eleven years later Dee Holladay introduced BLM archeologist Richard E. Fike to Westwater and the cave. His notes were brief regarding what remained: “Artifacts in the cave include a Home Rule, Duffy-Trowbridge Range, a table, and two pole and straw beds.”<sup>37</sup> No longer were any letters present to help solve the puzzle of the cave, the handsomely carved chair (or chairs) disappeared, and other items of antiquity were gone. Perhaps not too late, the BLM designated the cave as a historic site, protecting it from vandals and souvenir hunters.

The grave speculated to be a half-mile away was, according to the most prevalent story, that of one of the outlaw brothers, who was wounded and died while fleeing the law. Perhaps it was one of the Steele brothers who were shot at by a posse in 1905. Former Westwater residents say it could have been anybody’s since many bodies had been found floating from Colorado to the area. Owen Malin had his own graveyard consisting of nine unidentified floating bodies he buried near Bitter Creek. Other bodies have been reported at Cisco. Perhaps the story we can all

most sympathize with is that shortly after the turn of the century an IRS agent came into Westwater snooping around. After a few days he mysteriously disappeared, never to be heard of again. It has been said the grave belongs to the IRS agent. Wishful thinking.

## 6

# The River Runners

## Entering the Gorge

Just beyond Outlaw Cave to the southeast is Marble Canyon. There is a good chance the name Marble Canyon can be attributed to comments about Westwater Canyon made in 1916 by the famous early whitewater photographer and adventurer Ellsworth Kolb. He compared it to the Grand Canyon, which is immediately preceded by a Marble Canyon. Kolb observed: "It has an inner gorge of granite, and schist narrow and dark colored, a plateau then other walls of bright red sandstone as far as it went in form and color a replica of the Grand Canyon in Arizona over 400 miles farther down the river." He said, "It is the Grand Canyon in miniature."<sup>1</sup>

Although Westwater may be described as a miniature Grand Canyon, it is even more minuscule in terms of the histories that have been written about it—there are but a few articles. Understandably the Grand Canyon is a natural wonder of the world and there is immensely more interest in it than in Westwater. Still, much of the Grand Canyon's story, like that of the Colorado River that formed it, extends hundreds of miles upstream to its primary sources, the Green and upper Colorado Rivers and their tributaries. These upstream influences are not exclusively geological but include a considerable amount of history, particularly of men on the river. In fact a few old boaters are

mainly responsible for accumulating and disseminating the history we have of the Grand Canyon. Unfortunately for Westwater Canyon, river historians such as Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, Robert Brewster Stanton, and Otis “Dock” Marston never ran the upper reaches of the Colorado River.

There is an unexplainable but real mystique related to running the Colorado and Green Rivers. That was particularly true for the early boaters who traversed the Grand Canyon. Beginning with John Wesley Powell’s journey, recorded in *The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons*, each expedition that followed wanted to stake its claim in Colorado River history and sometimes to dispute those of others. Such seemed to be the motivation of historian Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, whose 1872 trip with Powell was largely ignored until Dellenbaugh published *The Romance of the Colorado River* in 1904. Likewise, Robert Brewster Stanton questioned both James White’s claims of having been first through the Grand Canyon in 1867 and Powell’s account of the 1869 departure from his party of the Howland brothers and Dunn at Separation Rapid. The parts of Stanton’s book, which was never published in full, that disputed those events appeared under the title *Colorado River Controversies*.

Dellenbaugh’s and Stanton’s considerable research and notes established a foundation for Green and Colorado River history, though their work paled in comparison to what Otis “Dock” Marston assembled during his lifetime. Since the 1960s, there has probably not been a book written on the Grand Canyon that hasn’t quoted Marston or benefitted from his exhaustive research stored at the Huntington Library. Unfortunately, all of these historians were more focused on the Green River than the Upper Colorado, because that was the river of choice for the start of many of the early expeditions. Perhaps a running history of the upper Colorado River would have fared better had Captain Samuel Adams succeeded in following it in 1869. Then again, if Adams had succeeded, nobody would have believed him.

In May of 1869, a young Captain Samuel Adams stepped off the Union Pacific train at Green River, Wyoming, and approached a camp of several trappers that included Jack Sumner. The trappers were awaiting the arrival of Major John Wesley Powell and the boats that would take them on their historic journey down

the Green and Colorado Rivers. The confident Captain Adams, though green, convinced the trappers that he would be accompanying them on the exploratory trip. He was convincing up until Powell arrived, rejected his credentials from Washington, D.C., and nixed him from the expedition.

Shortly after this snub, a determined Adams arrived at a mining camp at the headwaters of the Blue River at Breckenridge, Colorado, intent on tackling the Grand River (as the upper Colorado was then called). At Breckenridge, the slick-tongued Adams persuaded resident miners to build and outfit four boats that were described by Wallace Stegner as being "built on the spot out of green lumber, undecked and with no air compartments." Then with ten volunteers he set off down the Blue River to California on June 12, 1869.

Adams was trying to convince the federal government that a potential thoroughfare existed on the Colorado River between Colorado and California, and that it would be as vital to the Pacific coast "as the Mississippi was to the Midwest." It is hard to comprehend Captain Adams's thinking when existing reports had already established that boats could travel upstream on the Colorado only into Nevada and that above there deep canyons prevented any possibility of such a river highway. But Adams claimed expertise in the matter, having traveled in 1865, in a small sternwheeler piloted by Captain Thomas Trueworthy, up the Colorado River from its mouth to a location above Boulder Canyon. So in 1869 he set out to prove his claim that "there are none of those dangerous obstructions which have been represented by those who may have viewed them at a distance, and whose imaginary canons and rapids below had almost disappeared at the approach of the steamer."<sup>2</sup>

It did not take long for Adams's experiences on the Blue and Grand Rivers to disprove his claims. Before Adams reached the Grand, five of his party quit and he lost two boats and substantial supplies. Only then did he begin to use more caution in the rapids, but that wasn't enough once he reached Gore Canyon, where he lost the remaining boats a couple of miles into the cataract-clogged canyon. Not to be deterred, Adams built four rafts and worked his way down the Grand River to a location shortly below Gore Canyon, some one hundred ninety miles



upstream of Westwater. There, he lost the last raft, and with only two men remaining, the expedition ended on August 13, 1869. Resolutely, Captain Adams would not admit defeat even at the moment that he called off the survey. Instead he termed the expedition a success, saying that they had conquered the only obstacles along the entire Colorado River and that only a “narrow territory” stood between where they quit and the lower Colorado he had boated four years earlier. He wrote:

One of the main objects of the expedition had been accomplished, which was to ascertain where was the principal fall of water between the point where we started on the mountains ten thousand feet above the sea, and the Pacific Coast. I felt satisfied that nothing more could be done by using further arguments to go on; and with the greatest reluctance we concluded to cross the country by land to Delaware Flats, at the base of the Rocky Mountains. I was satisfied that we had gone over the most difficult portion of our route. Three years before I stood at the head of the Black or Big Canon of the Colorado River, and looking northeast I could see a valley extending seventy-five miles in length. I now stood at a point above, and looking southwest could see the narrow territory which separated us. I confess that it was with no ordinary feelings that I was compelled to yield to the force of circumstances.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps Captain Adams could have been the upper Colorado River’s answer to John Wesley Powell had he not been forced to abandon the expedition, but it’s not likely. Adams’s lack of good judgment and poor planning sealed his fate from the start, and even if he had been able to continue further, it is unlikely Adams could have accomplished anything more than turning his party into additional statistics claimed by Westwater, Cataract, or the Grand Canyon. It would be forty-seven years before the upper Colorado, or Grand, River would make headlines.

#### Ellsworth Kolb and Bert Loper

In the summer of 1916 Ellsworth Kolb left his home at Grand Canyon with the intention of eventually traveling all of the Colorado River tributaries leading to the Grand Canyon. He had already accomplished part of this when he and his brother Emery boated from Green River, Wyoming, to the Gulf of California in

1911.<sup>4</sup> Kolb's first plan was to boat the Gunnison River through the infamous Black Canyon, connect with the Grand River near Grand Junction, Colorado, and continue downstream to Moab, Utah. It was expected that Emery Kolb would accompany his brother Ellsworth, but unbeknownst to the media, the Kolb partnership was strained and on the verge of breaking up.

William C. Suran indicated that part of the problem was their distinctly different personalities. Emery Kolb "was aggressive, concerned about his financial security, and quick to fight for what he deemed his rights. [He] was a shrewd business man, always looking for an angle that would benefit him and the business."<sup>5</sup> Ellsworth, on the other hand, was a "wandering spirit." He refrained from the feuding between his brother, Fred Harvey, and the National Park Service over the Kolbs' studio on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. According to Suran, Ellsworth detested the daily routine of working at the studio and delivering lectures, which "set him to brooding about distant places." He wrote Emery's wife in 1914 that "as soon as I am alone I am as carefree as ever and happy whether I am making money or not as long as my health is good. That is all that matters."<sup>6</sup>

One year earlier, during a 1915 lecture that Ellsworth Kolb gave to a First Baptist church in Denver, he indicated that he and his brother were making plans to explore other arms of the Grand and Green Rivers the following year, including the Black Canyon of the Gunnison River.<sup>7</sup> Working together the following spring did not materialize though. The brothers continued to drift apart and except for their being hired to assist with a United States Geological Survey (USGS) of Cataract Canyon in 1921 and their help locating John and Bessie Hyde's boat in the Grand Canyon when they turned up missing in 1928, there was little more adventure the brothers pursued together.

Instead, Ellsworth Kolb invited an inexperienced Grand Canyon cattleman, John W. Shields, to accompany him in boating the treacherous Black Canyon. Also accompanying them part way was the millionaire Julius Frederick Stone, who funded the expedition and had considerable whitewater experience himself, having boated the Grand Canyon with Nathaniel Galloway in 1909. Stone brought a New York acquaintance of his, N. B. Stearn. On July 26, 1916, the first day they were on the

Gunnison, they lost one of their two canvas boats in the first rapid at Cimarron, Colorado. Four days later on July 30 the party decided to discontinue the trip due to the "dilapidated condition of our boat, in addition to its unsuitability to our needs."<sup>8</sup> Stone and Stearn had enough and needed to return to their businesses, while Ellsworth and Shields waited for the delivery of a lost boat that was to have arrived at the onset of the expedition. Finally, a Peterboro freight canoe arrived at Montrose, Colorado. Far superior in strength and endurance to the canvas boats, the freight canoe was a sturdy eighteen-foot, two-hundred-pound canoe that was described in Moab's newspaper, the *Times-Independent*:

Each end of the canoe was covered with canvas bolted down to the sides, in which to store provisions and equipment. In the event that the boat should be overturned in a rapid, the equipment will not be dumped into the river or damaged by water. There is also a canvas covering for the center of the boat for use in the event of running rapids by use of tow-lines. The boat will then become a regular submarine. In order to provide the compartments it was necessary to place two bulkheads back of the rowing space across the boat so that water could be shut out of the ends. The outside of the boat is covered with water-proof canvas of the strongest texture, and it is believed that it will withstand many hard contacts with rocks.<sup>9</sup>

Postponing their plans to boat the Black Canyon of the Gunnison River until the water dropped significantly, Kolb and Shields instead decided to float the Colorado River from the Gunnison Delta near Grand Junction, Colorado, to Moab, Utah. On August 16, 1916, the boaters pushed off the shore at the delta expecting a leisurely float the entire distance, and except for a brief experience at Black Rocks in Ruby Canyon, there were no incidents during the day to convince them otherwise. That evening, after arriving at the town of Westwater, the boaters were surprised to learn of an unconquered canyon below town. The town's residents told Kolb and Shields that nobody had ever successfully traversed the canyon and that many had died trying. Particularly dangerous were two rapids named "Double Pitch" and "Whirlpool."<sup>10</sup>

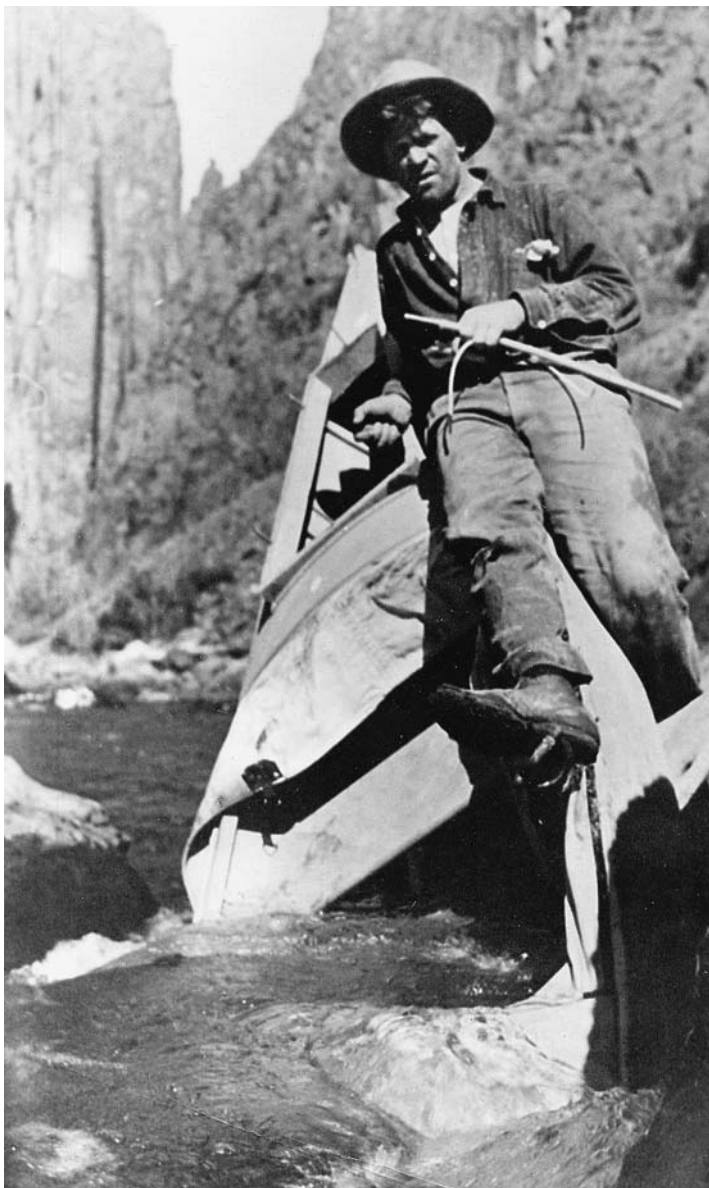
When describing Whirlpool Rapid, one old-timer even told Kolb and Shields that "fishes brains are spattered on the walls" and that "we would never get thru."<sup>11</sup> Perhaps Shields didn't



Upper Westwater Canyon in 1916. Bert Loper ran the first day of rapids, so he is likely the boater in this seventeen-foot, cedar freight canoe with hatch covers over each end. Ellsworth Kolb photo, Kolb Collection, Cline Library, Special Collections and Archives, Northern Arizona University.

want to be spattered on the wall either. He decided he was not cut out to be a “waterman,” and refused to tackle the Westwater rapids. Kolb, not wanting to run the canyon alone, asked resident ranchers to portage their canoe to the Cisco pumphouse, bypassing the canyon on their way to Moab. Kolb intended running the Westwater rapids another time, and so while the boat was being portaged, he and Shields spent two days in the canyon examining the rapids to get an idea of what to expect when he returned.

From atop the Precambrian cliffs overlooking Westwater’s inner gorge, Kolb wrote: “We could not get close to the Double Pitch but had an excellent view of it from an overhanging ledge. It lived up to its sinister reputation. It was a short but dangerous rapid. What made this section especially dangerous was the fact that one rapid followed another altogether too close for comfort.”<sup>12</sup> For mid-August, the Colorado River was running higher than normal, with flows of 10,100 to 12,100 cfs during the two days they studied the canyon. At these water levels, Kolb could well have imagined fish brains being splattered on the walls when he described Whirlpool Rapid, observing that “all water coming down the canyon which was in a half circle at this point, was



Bert Loper in Black Canyon shortly after the Westwater run in 1916. Loper used dynamite to dislodge the trapped boat. Ellsworth Kolb photo, Kolb Collection, Cline Library, Special Collections and Archives, Northern Arizona University.

thrown against a point of granite extending from one side and the water whirled around at tremendous speed in a 75 foot circle, which it had carved out of the walls which were over 300-feet-high. A ten-foot wave rolled back from the wall. All timber coming down stream was caught and held for hours.”<sup>13</sup> At the stage of water Kolb observed, he conceded it was impossible to get through Whirlpool Rapid, but he imagined it could be done at a lower stage and expressed a determination to try it later.

A month later, Ellsworth Kolb did return, bringing with him another familiar name in river lore, Bert Loper.<sup>14</sup> Ellsworth first met Bert Loper in Glen Canyon when he and his brother Emery made their historic Grand Canyon trip in 1911. Kolb realized by this point that he needed an experienced boatman if he were to successfully boat Westwater and Black Canyons, and there weren’t many more experienced than Loper.

Bert Loper’s first boating experiences occurred in 1893 and 1894 when he was prospecting for gold on the San Juan River. He returned to the river in 1907, when he teamed up with Charles Silver Russell and Edwin R. Monett, intending to traverse the Grand Canyon. The party started at Green River, Utah, and continued through Cataract Canyon and into Glen Canyon, where the shutter on Loper’s camera got stuck and he left Monett and Russell to have it repaired. The men planned to rendezvous at Lee’s Ferry and continue through the Grand Canyon, but the pair did not wait long enough for Loper to return and continued without him, making an historical journey that became a lifelong disappointment for Loper. Alone, Loper then hauled his boat an amazing 160 miles up the Colorado River to Hite, Utah, settling nearby in Red Canyon for six years. Truly, Loper’s experience with whitewater would benefit Kolb’s agenda. In 1916 Bert Loper was a newlywed, having married Rachel Jameson on April 29, four months before he received an invitation from Kolb to boat Westwater and the Black Canyon. Without taking much time to honeymoon with his new bride, Loper was in Colorado by September 8 ready to run rapids with Ellsworth Kolb.

Starting at Glenwood Springs, Kolb and Loper took turns rowing and playing passenger in the decked-over Peterboro canoe on their way to the head of Westwater Canyon. The boat was built for one oarsman, so during smaller rapids and the

lengthy flat water the passenger rode on top of the boat's stern. Arriving at Westwater, they were met by Frank E. Dean, a professional photographer whom Kolb hired to make quality movies of the now highly publicized historic event of running Westwater Canyon's rapids.<sup>15</sup> Accompanying Dean on horseback were Westwater's deputy sheriff, Harvey Edward Herbert, and rancher William Stubbs, who would serve as guides and potential rescuers should the boaters get into trouble and require a long rope to be pulled out of the steep canyon. The first half of the canyon didn't present any obstacles for Kolb and Loper, and the horsemen could view most of the boating activity from the bench above the river. A camp was previously established a few miles from the head of the canyon where the men and horses could get to the river.

On September 25, 1916, the Colorado River at Westwater was running 3,980 cfs when Loper entered at the head of the canyon. Rather than taking turns throughout the scheduled two-day event, the rapids were divided between the two boaters, Loper getting the first six rapids. Above the river, on a steep trail occasionally used by cattle, the ranchers and Dean followed the boaters downstream. At the head of the canyon, there were numerous places for Dean to set up the movie camera and take pictures of the boat, but as the canyon deepened, his opportunities became limited, so he pushed ahead searching for locations where he could see the boat. Kolb preferred taking closer photographs and stayed as near to the bank as possible. He rode on top of the boat during the calmer stretches, then ran or walked around the rapids, all along cheering Loper on.

Late in the day as Loper approached the inner gorge, Dean and the ranchers headed to camp while Kolb remained behind to photograph the run through a few more rapids. The primary events of running Double Pitch and Whirlpool Rapid were scheduled for the following morning. Now high atop the cliffs, Kolb watched Loper with enthusiasm as he tackled the first couple of rapids; then when the boat drew nearer to Double Pitch Rapid, Kolb waved Loper in for the day. Bert Loper, though, misinterpreted the sign as a "go ahead" and headed toward one of the two worst rapids in the canyon. From the bench, Kolb watched as Loper approached, then dropped into the ten-foot trough of



Double Pitch Rapid. Kolb immediately lost sight of his partner. He feared Loper had capsized in the rapid. Distraught, Kolb searched for over an hour, walking back and forth along the cliff looking for any sign of Loper or the boat. Seeing no sign of either of them, Kolb conscientiously blamed himself for not warning Loper sooner and felt responsible for his death.

As the sun started to set behind the cliffs to the west, Kolb reluctantly gave up looking for any sign of wreckage and climbed up to the trail that led to their camp. Arriving at camp, Kolb met Frank Dean and asked if anybody had seen any wreckage of the boat. Surprised by Kolb's question, Dean replied that there was no wrecked boat and that Loper was in camp. Relieved, Kolb immediately located Loper and shook his hand.

The next day fell to Ellsworth Kolb and was reported in the *Grand Junction Daily News*.

Kolb got away under ideal picture conditions and started for the Little Niagara Whirlpool sections, the most demonical on the entire river. He had not been gone long when his boat got into a place where the waves were running many feet high, tangoing back and forth between granite cliffs and making slaps at his boat that sent it hither and thither like a chip. Kolb, clung on with his masterly skill and rode the bronco.

Suddenly he struck a place that would have made a whirling dervish sea-sick and the boat shot over and he "got out and got under" good and plenty. He reached the life line and keel of the good ship and finally by might and main turned the craft right side up and crawled aloft. The watchful picture men, perched like magpies on the skyline above, did not see the upset. He had inhaled water and choked and gasped for some minutes.

Then came the whirlpool. The picture men who had gone down stream a ways saw his hat floating down the river and all of them had a terrible scare, fearing he was lost. Then came the worst place of all. Straight down the stream Kolb could see the water spouting many feet in the air as it shot with tremendous force against boulder the size of a house in the whirlpool rapid. To the left was a . . . rock which was covered with water about half the time. He saw that by making a corkscrew curve with a back action kick and a swipe at the scenery he might get thru, if he could dodge all the 100-ton pebbles and avoid the geysers of idiotic water that spit at the sky and found a target far below in the chugging foam under the rocks. He made it—not. A wave slapped him a half-ton lick on the face and picked him up, gunboat

and all and rammed him over five feet, right up on top of the [rock]. The boat skidded off upside down, full of water, in the insane foam.

Here Kolb made the movie man above close his eyes and crank, crank, crank with only a prayer and a peep to see if aim was still on the struggle below. Dean's eyes opened wide when he saw, not a dead man floating down stream with a smashed canoe trailing behind, but a very sore mariner whipping his boat back into line, safe beyond the rapid, grinning up the cliff with an "I told you so" expression in his eyes, if anyone could have seen it.<sup>16</sup>

Ellsworth Kolb and Bert Loper were for many years given credit for being the first boaters to go through Westwater Canyon and survive, but there's a good chance they were not. They were, however, the first who knowingly descended Westwater with prior knowledge of its sinister reputation. They opened the door to understanding Westwater. There were others before and since who contributed to knowledge of the canyon. A chronological overview of other successful and failed, verifiable and probable boaters within Westwater Canyon follows.

#### Frank Clarence Kendrick<sup>17</sup>

Frank C. Kendrick and his survey party (working for the railroad) did not boat through, but portaged twelve miles around Westwater Canyon, although at least one historian claimed it was not the difficulty of the rapids below that persuaded them. The Denver, Colorado Canyon and Pacific Railway was the idea of Frank M. Brown, who imagined a railway for the delivery of coal from Grand Junction, Colorado, to the West Coast. Frank Kendrick and his party surveyed the then Grand River to its confluence with the Green River, then traveled up it to Green River Station. Robert Brewster Stanton, who was chief engineer for the project and later was known as a historian of the Colorado River, insisted the avoidance of Westwater Canyon was planned and not the product of fear. Still, Kendrick's notes for April 10, 1889, while surveying from the "Box X" Ranch (the Bar X, or Westwater, Ranch) to the mouth of "Hades Canyon" showed some signs of reluctance to enter it. For example, this is the only time Westwater was called Hades Canyon. Kendrick also mentioned that this is "where the woman drowned," a seemingly strange reference with no further explanation.<sup>18</sup> Their boatman on the survey was Charles Brock,

who nearly went into the rapids and had to be towed back to avoid them. Whether it was the rapids or their plan that prompted the portage doesn't really matter; the fact is the canyon had already established a dangerous reputation.<sup>19</sup>

#### Elmer Kane, Frank W. Emerson, and Charles Duke

The first named individuals who may have successfully boated Westwater Canyon, in 1888, were prospector Elmer Kane, San Francisco newsman Frank W. Emerson, and Grand Junction salesman Charles Duke. Much of what we know of Kane's expedition came, more than fifty years after the fact, from what was known as the River Bed case. Between 1929 and 1931, testimony was taken from men who had traveled the Green and Grand Rivers to determine their navigability. The River Bed case involved hearings in Salt Lake City, Utah; Denver, Colorado; and Los Angeles, California, to determine whether the river beds belonged to the United States government (if they were not navigable) or the state of Utah (if they were navigable). From the testimonies came considerable historical data that would otherwise have been lost. During the hearings, Elmer Kane testified he had come down the Grand River from Grand Junction to Moab in a crude raft that he found on a river bank. The raft was made from dry pine logs, and it looked like it had been abandoned for some time. It was approximately fourteen feet long and five feet wide. Kane's party used long poles to keep them off of rocks and provide propulsion.<sup>20</sup>

A story about a large gold mine in the Grand Canyon prompted Kane and the others to boat the Grand River in the summer of 1888. Kane had traveled from Ouray to Grand Junction to meet with Jack Sumner, who had passed through the Grand Canyon with John Wesley Powell on his initial 1869 expedition. Kane could not locate Sumner so he and the two men decided to travel to the Grand Canyon anyway and inspect some placer mines along their way. They had enough difficulty with the simple raft to force them to search for a boat when they arrived at Moab. There is very little mention of rapids in Kane's testimony. Kane had considerable experience with row boats on other rivers. He claimed he had been down nearly the entire Grand River prospecting. Part of his upper Grand River travel was by pack and saddle horse.

We may never know the complete story, but we do know that Elmer Kane later carved his name in Colorado river history by participating in the second Stanton expedition, which completed the Denver, Colorado Canyon and Pacific Railroad survey through the Grand Canyon in 1890 and by being an oarsman with the 1891 Best prospecting expedition, which ended unceremoniously early after losing a boat in Cataract Canyon and abandoned its mining venture at Lee's Ferry. Concerning his being hired as an oarsman by Robert Brewster Stanton, Kane testified: "So I got on that trip; I saw Mr. Stanton, and got on the party, and the trip through the Grand river with a raft was one of his inducements, because he didn't take anybody but what could take care of themselves and work, and had to be husky and strong, and they were supposed to be swimmers, and good oarsmen, and so on."<sup>21</sup> Kane during his testimony mentioned seeing three other placer miners with rockers who had come down river to the north end of the Blue Mountains in a flat bottom skiff and had also started at Grand Junction.

James E. Miller and O. D. Babcock

During the summer of 1897, James E. Miller and O. D. Babcock closed their dental practices for awhile to locate Indian relics along the Grand River.<sup>22</sup> Their intention was to travel from Glenwood Springs to the confluence with the Green River, then up to Green River Station, from where they would return home by stage. Traveling in a seventeen-foot boat with two water-tight compartments, they were far better prepared than the surveyors and prospectors that preceded them. While there is no evidence they knew the risks of boating the canyon, the brief description they gave in Moab's *Grand Valley Times* left little doubt they had at least tackled some of the canyon: "They report having had some exciting rides over rapids; in some cases boat and passengers diving under the water. The worst places being through the Palisades and the Granite canon above Cisco."<sup>23</sup>

The dentists meanwhile corresponded with their hometown in Glenwood Springs as they traveled, and the *Avalanche* reported extensively about them running the Palisade Rapids that formerly existed northeast of Grand Junction. They compared the preparation for this rapid to that of a "soldier going into battle,"

as they entered the rock strewn rapid with “set teeth” determined to get through. Following the description the newspaper reported, “They wisely did not attempt the Black Canyon run, with its 15 miles of length between perpendicular walls of a thousand feet in height, through which two travelers have gone while a dozen have failed.”<sup>24</sup> Who knows why the newspaper editor made this comment? The Black Canyon is on the Gunnison River, a tributary of the Colorado River. The only canyon between Glenwood Springs and Green River that remotely resembles this description would be Westwater Canyon. The dentists likely did descend Westwater, but the comment about the “Black Canyon” does create some doubt.

Several weeks later the dentists returned to Moab by rowing upstream from the Cataracts. They had changed their minds about returning up the Green River. From Moab they returned home by stage.

Hidden away in the massive Colorado and Green River histories collected by Otis “Dock” Marston at the Huntington Library is a handwritten note that reads: “experiences of Dr. O. D. Babcock and myself in the summer of 1897.” The note refers to correspondence from Dr. J. E. Miller of Yampa, Colorado, to Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, regarding Miller’s experiences on the Colorado River that year. Unfortunately, the letter has not been located in searches through the Marston and Dellenbaugh records. It might have given more insight into these dentists’ activities in Westwater Canyon. One thing is certain and was noted by the dentists at the end of their exploration: they made photographs. Perhaps someday the letter and photographs will come to light and allow us to finalize their place in Westwater history.<sup>25</sup>

### Walter Everett Mendenhall

Prospector Walter Everett Mendenhall, probably better known for his travels in the San Juan region, testified during the River Bed trials that in the summer of 1907 he took about a fourteen-foot skiff down the Colorado River from Grand Junction to Westwater railroad station at the head of Westwater Canyon. He and his brother, who had secured a mining job in the Lasal Mountains and had persuaded Walter to go along, then spent the winter at Richardson, which is nearer to Moab. They traveled to Moab the

following spring. No specific indication exists that they boated from Westwater down to Richardson, but the next year they still had the boat his brother built at Grand Junction. The brothers probably got back onto the river at Castle Valley for the trip to Moab. The only rapids Mendenhall mentioned were eighteen to twenty-five miles above Moab.<sup>26</sup> About three years earlier, Walter's brother had been further down the river examining some of the country in Cataract Canyon.

#### Raymond C. Seitz

Like Frank Clarence Kendrick and his 1889 railroad survey party, Raymond C. Seitz and his companions chose to bypass the canyon at Westwater. The group of five United States Geological Survey (USGS) surveyors set out from Grand Junction sometime in October 1911 to map the upper Colorado River. Using two "flat-bottomed rowboats, fourteen feet long with a four foot beam," the men traveled light while wagons with their gear trailed them. They primarily used the boats to cross the river and move downstream while surveying. Their survey included the drop in elevation of the river as far as the confluence. Although Seitz did not descend Westwater Canyon by boat, he did include it in his survey. He made observations "from his traverse line along the bench a considerable distance above the water, and elevations of the surface of the water were taken at various breaks along the water surface,"<sup>27</sup> but he was able to obtain water readings down to mile 49, suggesting he must have been able to get down to the river bank. He noted that

The boat was portaged throughout the canyon, being taken out at the head and put back on the river at Big Hole, which is at mile 56. No water readings were taken until they reached mile 55, but the fall of the river was calculated from mile 49 [mile 123 on Belknap map] to Big Hole at mile 56 [mile 116], a distance of 7 miles, and the drop is 119 feet.<sup>28</sup>

#### Paul Adams

The residents of Westwater Station readily informed anyone they encountered along the river of the dangerous rapids below, but because the station was a half-mile from the water, many of the early boaters and prospectors entered the canyon blindly. One

small, elderly Swiss carpenter, Paul Adams, was not so blind to the canyon's danger since he had spent several months living at Westwater before he attempted his journey. He had started from Rifle, Colorado, in the fall of 1915 and floated his homemade boat to Westwater Station. There he stopped for the winter; then in late May 1916 a letter from Westwater to Moab's *Grand Valley Times* mentioned him once again taking to the river, with the intention of boating to the town of Green River. The letter stated that "every effort was made by Westwater people to dissuade him from attempting to go through the canyon. They bought his first boat and even wrote the sheriff for authority to detain him, but were informed that could not legally be done, and he built a new boat, stocked it and departed."<sup>29</sup>

Many of the Westwater residents concluded that Adams had died in the canyon, not having heard from him again. One former resident, Beatrix Simpson, wrote to the *Times-Independent* in 1956 concerning a reported skeleton found in Westwater Canyon during the spring. She hinted it could have been Paul Adams: "His aim in life was building a row boat to run the rapids below Westwater and he devoted every leisure hour to that work. We remember him as a pleasant and polite man who talked with an accent, wore silver knob earrings, smoked Union Leader 'Oonion Leadah' tobacco—and would not listen or be dissuaded from his purpose of running the rapids—though no one had been known to accomplish it. This man worked months on his boat and oars and, during high water—in June, we think—loaded and took off."<sup>30</sup> How long he was in the canyon is not clear, but Paul Adams did survive the canyon. He, however, did not successfully navigate it because he wrecked his boat and "was barely able to reach the shore and climb out of the canyon."<sup>31</sup> From Cisco, Adams took a train to Leadville, Colorado, and did not return. Based upon the date of the news report out of Westwater, Paul Adams likely entered Westwater Canyon when the river, in late May, was running at 21,000 to 28,200 cfs. He was fortunate to have gotten to shore.

Frank "Bunny" Barnes

Like many before him, Frank M. Barnes was a prospector working his way down the river panning for gold. Unlike many before



him, he was elderly—described as being about eighty years old when he left Grand Junction, Colorado, in October 1921. He had a placer claim at Temple Bar, which is now buried beneath Lake Mead, and intended to get to it by boat. He left no record of the trip, but it was reported in the *Times-Independent*.

Mr. Barnes, whose boat is a twenty-foot, flat-bottomed craft, did not know of the existence of the rapids in the Granite canyon, and he embarked on the cruise in blissful ignorance of the dangers ahead of him. Once he had entered the canyon, he could not turn back, and he probably experienced the most thrilling sixteen-mile journey that he could have wished for. Several times his boat brushed against rocks, and on three occasions it was half-filled with water. He stated Tuesday to the *Times-Independent* that his success was due, in his opinion, to the design of his boat, which rides lightly on the water and would be hard to capsize, owing to the flat bottom. At one place in Granite canyon, he states, the river takes a sheer drop of from seven to ten feet, and for sixteen miles the stream is a series of rapids and cataracts. The canyon is indescribably beautiful, the black granite walls rising from the river to a height of several thousand feet. The canyon itself is but a narrow crack, and the river races through it at terrific speed. The chief danger lies in the countless sharp rocks which rise out of the water, and if a boat were to strike one of these it would be dashed to pieces.<sup>32</sup>

Although Barnes was proud of his boat design, several people who met him below Cataract Canyon described it as being impossibly unstable for river travel—a twenty-foot “clumsy, convex-bottomed boat” that was open, with a steamer trunk lashed on the back. It also carried a tent and stove. One of E. C. Larue’s USGS boatmen tried the boat out and said “it was the most impossible craft for Colorado River travel that was ever built.”<sup>33</sup> Barnes was talked out of running the Grand Canyon below Lee’s Ferry.

### The Galloway Brothers

The River Bed case hearings also revealed that John and Parley Galloway had boated Westwater in the spring of 1926 or 1927. Most likely it was 1927, judging from a letter to the editor from John Galloway published in the *Times-Independent* on March 3, 1927. A small uproar had risen regarding John trapping beaver below Moab, and he responded that he would “move my camps



Parley Galloway (in hat), Grand Canyon trip. Photo courtesy of Kay E. Neilsen.



Parley Galloway. Photo courtesy of Kay E. Neilsen.

and work further up the river according to instructions.”<sup>34</sup> Like their father, Nathaniel “Nate” Galloway, these brothers hunted and trapped along the Green and Colorado Rivers and were very experienced boaters. Parley Galloway later in 1927 guided Clyde Eddy and a group of college men down the Green and Colorado River from Green River, Utah, to Needles, California. Clyde Eddy based *Down the World’s Most Dangerous River* on that expedition.<sup>35</sup>

The boat the brothers took down Westwater was a Galloway-type design that measured “16 ft. long, 4 ft. wide at top, 36 in. at bottom, draft 4 in. loaded.” It was an open boat without a cover. John Galloway described their experience:

Well, we had lots of trouble in that Westwater canyon; it is a continual mass of rapids in there; it is a hard granite formation; it has a tremendous fall down through there; all of those rapids have from two to four foot fall in them; I mean straight drops.

And there is a back suction under those little falls that makes it quite a difficult proposition, and dangerous. Some places we could line them, other places the granite wall was like marble, smooth, you couldn’t stand on your feet; steep; some places it was boxed so there was no chance to line a boat, and we had to ride over them.

If I recollect, we were two days in that canyon; we couldn’t even find room to make a bed-down; there was no beaches, no vegetation to speak of. There was places in there that there is some vegetation, but where we happened to hit that night there was no vegetation of any kind, and no bench ground at all, just solid granite. So we had to make our bed in the crevices of the rocks.<sup>36</sup>

Parley added further that “the rapids are as bad in there as there is in the Grand Canyon.”<sup>37</sup>

Owen Malin claimed that his father had rescued the Galloway brothers from the canyon sometime around Thanksgiving in the early 1920s. He was certain it was the Galloway brothers, but the season would have been wrong based upon their testimony. Of the event Malin said: “We fished ‘em out over the rim there one time. They’d hung onto those [slick] rocks and tore their fingers all off on the ends. It was quite a mess. Pretty cold and chilled we brought them into the home here. Never did find any of their equipment.”<sup>38</sup> Perhaps there were two attempts to run Westwater by the brothers, but their testimony

during the River Bed hearings did not support that there were. They made it through the canyon and boated to Moab.

#### Hyrum H. Turner

During the late 1920s Hyrum H. Turner, a trapper from Moab, poled his canoe from Westwater to Moab. He was with his two oldest grandchildren, ages sixteen and twenty-one or twenty-two. His canoe was described as weighing ninety-six pounds, somewhat flat on the bottom, and pointed at both ends, which was mostly beneficial for upriver travel. Poling his canoe along until he wanted to cross the river, he would then use a paddle. In his River Bed testimony in 1929 he indicated his Westwater trip had been about a year earlier, placing him in the canyon sometime between 1927 and 1928.<sup>39</sup> In fact, during the winter of 1927, state game wardens arrested H. H. Turner and C. E. Malin (Elwood C. Malin) for illegally trapping beaver.<sup>40</sup> However, John Malin, the son of Elwood C. Malin, claims his father never boated Westwater Canyon.

#### A. P. Drew

During an interview with Dock Marston, Dr. A. P. Drew of Grand Junction claimed he had gone through Westwater in a large skiff built by his son-in-law, Russell Paige, in 1927 or 1928.<sup>41</sup> Harold Leich, who boated Westwater in 1933, wrote in his journal that Dr. Drew had told him he had been down the Colorado River only as far as Westwater, duck hunting, “but never attempted the dangerous canyon below.”<sup>42</sup> Drew also warned Leich about Ruby Canyon but said nothing about Westwater Canyon’s rapids, further indicating that he probably did not run Westwater.<sup>43</sup>

#### Beppo Saeckler

Highly advertised world champion canoeist Beppo Saeckler made his way along various waterways from Cincinnati, Ohio, to Grand Junction, Colorado in 1930. Leaving Cincinnati on April 13 “he paddled 700 miles down the Ohio river and 200 more on the Mississippi. From St. Louis he and his canoe rode by motor bus to Denver and thence to the Fraser River, a tributary to the Colorado. Since then he has been pursuing the water route. He



Shot of Skull Rapid in low water, 2002. Photo courtesy of Kyler Carpenter, BLM.

expects to paddle from Grand Junction to Moab and thence down the Colorado to the Pacific coast.”<sup>44</sup> Saeckler was born in Munich, Germany and claimed several canoeing championships there and in Austria. After arriving in the United States he gained notoriety for negotiating the Niagara Falls whirlpools in his canoe and for paddling three hundred miles nonstop from Dayton, Ohio, down the Miami and Ohio Rivers to Louisville, Kentucky, in 39 hours and 59 minutes.<sup>45</sup>

He used a Klepper folding boat that was described as looking like a “tiny rubber canoe.” The European folding boats looked much sleeker than other craft then traveling the western waterways. They resembled elongated kayaks and were shaped by wooden frames with rubber covers. Lighter than other boats, they were more maneuverable, and the collapsible design was convenient for portaging.

Saeckler was credited as the first man to boat through Byers Canyon above Kremmling, Colorado. Turning over a couple of times in rapids at Hot Sulphur Springs he continued on and only portaged around Shoshone Falls.<sup>46</sup> Newspapers followed Saeckler throughout the country, but the last reference to him may have been in the *Times-Independent*, which announced he was expected in Moab sometime during the week ending June 29, 1930.<sup>47</sup> The paper never reported that he arrived. Saeckler was fully aware of the difficulties that the Grand Canyon presented, but there is no indication that he expected any earlier major obstacles. Whether he was a casualty of the Colorado River or simply someone who discovered his limitations and abandoned his plans, we do not know.

Three years later, as Harold H. Leich was making similar plans to boat the Colorado, he mentioned he had heard of Beppo Saeckler’s exploits, but “how far he got down the Colorado I was never able to learn.”<sup>48</sup> Similar to trapper Denis Julien, who disappeared from the Colorado River’s history, Saeckler is missing in action. Spending a few days in Grand Junction, he put on a demonstration of his river skills before an audience of spectators. Then he was gone.

#### Harold H. Leich

Instead of battling for employment during the Great Depression, Harold Leich opted to follow a briefly transient lifestyle. He enjoyed the outdoors while attending Dartmouth College, and after graduating he decided to “devote his youth to a free-ranging life afloat” rather than squander his youth in a virtually nonexistent job market.<sup>49</sup> Starting in the autumn of 1929, Leich began his journeys by working on a freighter that took him from Manhattan to the West Coast. While in Portland he thought of boating the Missouri on his way home, but his plans changed



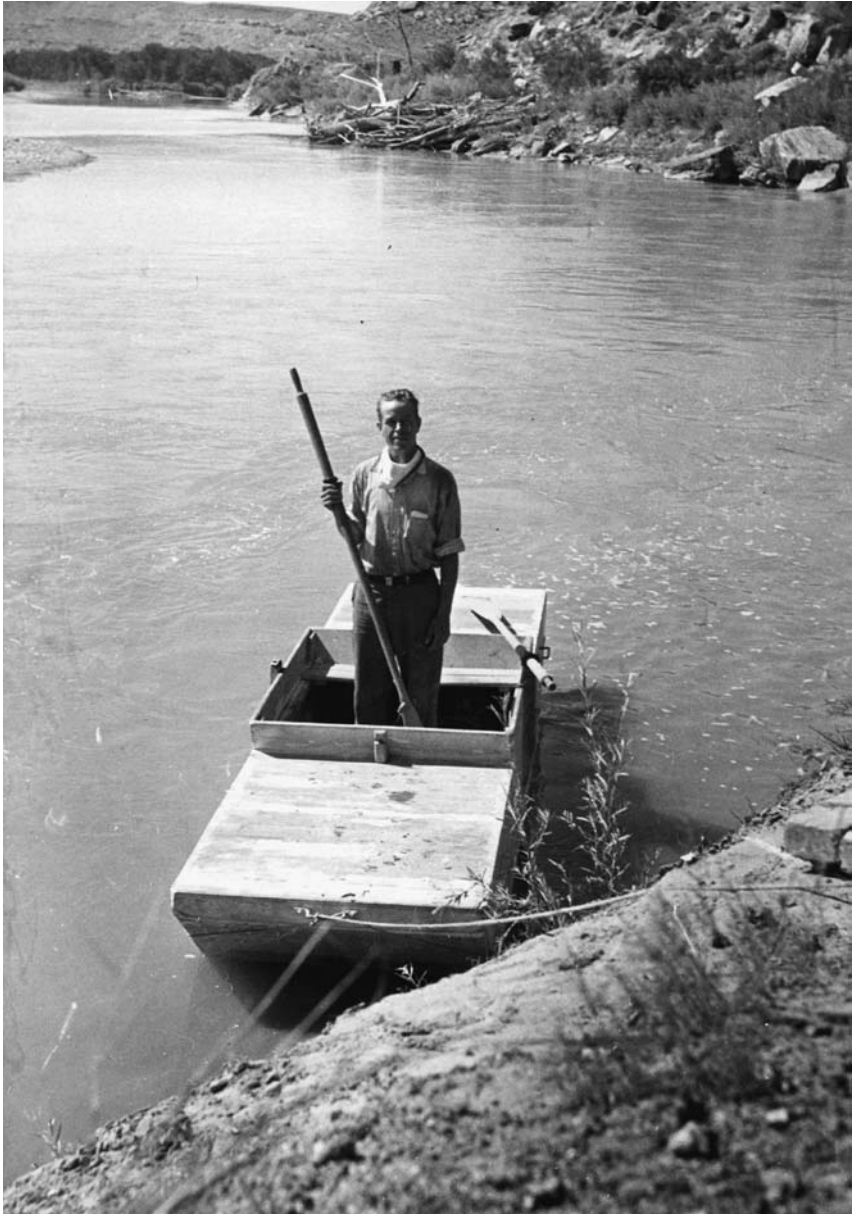
“Utaline: where Colorado River enters Utah. Boat with prospectors—Sims and Fortune—Taken from Utaline camp site.” Photo by Harold H. Leich. One of these prospectors, in the barely visible boat, approached Leich in Grand Junction to rent his newly built *Dirty Devil* to look for dinosaur bones in Horsethief and Ruby canyons above Westwater. The prospectors wound up renting from Grand Junction’s horse doctor A. P. Drew, who had some experience on the Colorado River and owned several boats. They left the river at Westwater’s railroad station. Photo courtesy of Harold M. and Jeffrey R. Leich.

after reading *Down the Yellowstone* by Lewis R. Freeman, and he decided to boat the Yellowstone River instead. Leich worked temporarily at Yellowstone National Park and eventually boated 266 miles of the river from Livingston, Montana, to Miles City. He was an avid reader, and books played an important part in his travels. During the fall of 1930, the writings of Clyde Eddy impressed him, and he became determined to attempt the Colorado River.<sup>50</sup>

On July 21, 1933, Leich shoved off the shoreline from Grand Lake, Colorado, and started his journey down the Colorado River. He was twenty-four years old and had spent several years saving and planning to shoot the rapids on the Colorado, which he had not seen.

For the river above Grand Junction, Colorado, he traveled light, paddling a kayak that he named *Rob Roy* most of the way, with portages at Gore and the Shoshone Dam. At the dam, Leich hailed a trucker and had his boat portaged two and a half miles





Harold H. Leich with the *Dirty Devil* at Cisco Pumphouse in 1933. Harold H. Leich photo courtesy of his sons Harold M. and Jeffrey R. Leich.

to the power plant. At the same location that Kolb and Loper started their 1916 trip down the Colorado River, he slid his boat off the lawn at the turbine house, dropped over the spillway, and continued downstream to Grand Junction.<sup>51</sup> At Grand Junction he stopped for eleven days to build a more buoyant and durable boat for the larger rapids reportedly downstream. He named his new scow the *Dirty Devil* and proudly described it in a local newspaper: "Thirteen feet overall, she was decked over except for a small cockpit, which I protected by a canvas cover snuggled around my waist. Her only disadvantage was that of many another buxom beauty, her weight, 400 pounds on the lumberyard scales. That meant that I couldn't carry her around the dangerous cataracts, but was committed to run every rapid through the Grand Canyon to the Gulf of California. The optimism of four-and-twenty."<sup>52</sup> On August 13, 1933, Leich left Grand Junction to continue his journey. His only knowledge of the stream ahead came from maps that he had spent a good deal of time studying as he prepared for the trip.

Leich arrived on the morning of August 16 near Westwater launch, where he met Elwood C. Malin, who was washing his car with river water. Malin asked Leich where he intended going with the boat and told him about Ellsworth Kolb and Bert Loper, "the toughest river rats that ever tackled the Colorado." Malin's stepfather, Ed Herbert, had assisted Kolb and Loper with their 1916 Westwater trip, and Malin invited Leich to his home at Westwater to read about it. There he showed him photos of the historical event and pulled out *Through the Grand Canyon from Wyoming to Mexico* by Ellsworth L. Kolb. At the back of the book was a yellowed newspaper clipping detailing a full account of the 1916 Westwater trip. Leich was not intimidated by the account, which he described as "oxygenated," but he was impressed that Kolb considered Westwater's rapids more dangerous than the Grand Canyon's. Undaunted, Leich was back on the river by noon and headed toward the canyon.<sup>53</sup>

The Colorado River was flowing at a miserably low 1,820 cubic feet per second when the *Dirty Devil* entered the head of the canyon. Westwater is unusual among river canyons because the whitewater is generally better when the Colorado River is low. Although the river runs slower, there are more rapids than



Harold H. Leich with the *Rob Roy* (a rubber folding kayak) started his journey at Grand Lakes, Colorado, on July 21, 1933. Here he is shown leaving Glenwood Springs. He abandoned the *Rob Roy* for the *Dirty Devil* at Grand Junction. Harold H. Leich photo courtesy of Harold M. and Jeffrey R. Leich.



“Washing down gravel bank at placer outfit. Easy rapids.” This placer prospect, seeking gold, was located below Westwater, between Cisco and Hotel Bottom on the Colorado River. Harold H. Leich photo courtesy of Harold M. and Jeffrey R. Leich.

at medium and higher water because new rocks appear. The sharp rocks rising from beneath the surface can make the white-water run especially difficult for larger boats, particularly at extremely low water levels such as those encountered by Leich.

Leich described the entrance to the canyon: “the Colorado burrows deeply into the hard underlying rock structure. Slowly the steep V-shaped inner trough deepens until the gleaming black walls, nearly vertical on both sides, rise more than a hundred feet above the river.”<sup>54</sup> Leich successfully tested the *Dirty Devil* in the small rapids in the upper canyon and stopped at Little Hole long enough to prepare his boat for the gorge. The placid water below Little Hole briefly discouraged him—he expected rapids much sooner—but then they began. He wrote: “Things happened so fast that I could not have given a detailed account of the rapids the next day. Time after time the *Dirty Devil* approached bottle-necks in the chasm where the river disappeared in a smother of foam. Sometimes I could tie up the boat safely and make a precarious way along polished slanting walls to take a look ahead. Sometimes the swift current made this impossible, or the walls came down sheer on either side so I could not land. Usually it made no difference, since the gorge was so narrow that there was little choice but to take to the center, glide down on the tongue of the cataract, and try to keep her bow pointed into the waves.”<sup>55</sup>

Nothing has changed from when Kolb, Loper, and Leich ran Westwater; the noted rapids remain Funnel Falls and Skull Rapids. Leich described his encounter with Funnel Falls:

At one point I tied up just above an eight-foot fall, between a large boulder on the left and the vertical granite on the right. I looked it over doubtfully, cursing myself for having tied up so close to the entrance, where I couldn’t swing into the best position before starting down the cataract. In spite of a poor entrance, she rode over the drop like a duck and in an instant was in the smoother water.<sup>56</sup>

He continues with a description of Skull Rapid.

The worst place was well in the middle course, perhaps half way between the Little Hole and Big Hole. A rather long rapids, dropping off terrifically, curved sharply to the left halfway through. An there around the corner the entire river spewed itself onto a large dipping ledge. Half of the flow then curled back to the left and flowed down

through the remaining rapids. The other half curled back on itself to the right, swirling in a narrow pool beneath the vertical walls. What would become of a voyager imprisoned in that whirlpool I would not care to imagine. Since the apex of the current ran full tilt onto the sloping ledge, I could not escape running the bow of the “Dirty Devil” high onto the rocks.

She swung around—luckily to the left—and made the rest of the rapids stern first, with the helmsman craning his neck to have a look at what was ahead!<sup>57</sup>

Drought conditions—similar to Leich’s—that existed in 1977 and 2002 provided more recent boaters an opportunity to experience Skull Rapid during extremely low water. Luckily for Leich, the *Dirty Devil* didn’t swing to the right where numerous inflatable boats have briefly plugged up the space between rock and wall, taking on tons of water, before being spit out the backside. Harold Leich’s wooden boat would have been mauled and likely broken had it entered the right slot, and his journey probably would have ended there.

Harold Leich survived Westwater but later wrecked his boat in Cataract Canyon, probably at Capsized Rapid. He swam and hiked thirty-seven miles to Hite, then walked an additional forty-five miles to Hanksville, where he was described as having a shoe on one foot and a gunny sack wrapped around the other, carrying a quart jar with a little water in it, starving, and sunburned. He considered Westwater “far tougher than Cataract Canyon.”<sup>58</sup>

#### Don Harris and Jack Brennan

In October 1946 the USGS sent expeditions down the Green and Colorado Rivers to measure the flow of all tributaries along them.<sup>59</sup> Don Harris and long-time boating companion Jack Brennan measured the stretch from the Colorado state line to the Colorado’s confluence with the Green River, where they met two other members of the survey coming down that river.

LaPhene Harris, known as Don, became acquainted with whitewater in 1938 shortly after meeting Norman Nevills in Mexican Hat, Utah, where Harris was assigned to gauge the San Juan River for the USGS. Nevills invited him to participate on a commercial expedition planned for 1938 that would include the first two women to transit the Grand Canyon.<sup>60</sup> During his time

off work Harris volunteered to help build, out of plywood, special cataract boats Nevills designed for the big water the expedition would experience in the Grand Canyon. Harris also helped finance Nevills and offered to man one of the three boats they built in trade for ownership of the one named the *Mexican Hat*.

Nevills named their three creations “cataract boats.” Detractors called them “sadirons” because they were shaped like the old-fashioned irons women heated on stoves for ironing clothes. Each weighed six hundred pounds, was sixteen feet long and unusually broad of beam and stern. The cockpit was forward of the middle, leaving an ample afterdeck on which a single passenger could lie flat while riding through rapids. The interiors contained the usual watertight compartments, arranged according to Nevills’ taste.<sup>61</sup>

Starting at Green River, Utah, Don Harris manned *Mexican Hat* as far as Lee’s Ferry, where he quit the party, citing that he was out of work leave with his employer. Other circumstances may have contributed to his departure, including difficulties they encountered in Cataract Canyon. The exodus created a rift with Nevills, who would later be credited as one of the pioneers of commercial river running. The 1938 expedition was his first on big water, and he continued through the Grand Canyon without Don Harris. Harris would later regret his decision to leave, but it did not deter his desire to return to the river.<sup>62</sup>

With his leave used up, Harris returned to Salt Lake City, where he met Bert Loper. Don Harris had heard about Loper so went to visit him at a nearby hospital to inquire about his river experiences. Loper invited him to go on a Grand Canyon trip the following year.<sup>63</sup> In 1939 Bert Loper, at the age of sixty-nine, finally made it through the canyon, with Don Harris.<sup>64</sup> They would do several other river trips together. Then in the mid-1940s while planning to boat Cataract Canyon, they placed an ad in the *Salt Lake Tribune* for passengers, and Jack Brennan applied. As it had with Harris, the river got into Brennan’s blood. They formed a small commercial business to defray costs of their trips. By the time they came to Westwater, the USGS was paying them to “make an inflow study on the Colorado and Green River system in the state of Utah.”<sup>65</sup>

Harris did not recall much of that first, 1946 descent and survey of Westwater Canyon in the *Mexican Hat*, only that he



Roy Christensen cheers on fellow boaters as they get pooped through the right run at Skull Rapid in 1977. Photo by and courtesy of Roy Christensen.

concentrated more on the river than the surroundings. He would descend the canyon five more times between 1959 and 1967, using fifteen-foot outboard motor boats with fiberglass hulls and specially designed water compartments. Possibly his last visit to Westwater was in 1970 when he walked the lower canyon while assisting with a search for the bodies of three deer hunters who lost their lives while boating the canyon.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps his deep concentration on the river ahead is the reason the late Colorado historian, Otis “Dock” Marston ranked Don Harris as one of the best rivermen.<sup>67</sup>

#### The University of Utah Party

Five University of Utah students made the first known whitewater run through Westwater by a rubber raft in 1950. Paul F. Geerlings led the party, which included Bruce Martin, Richard Cutler, Ed Kearfott, and Richard Sklar, on a leisurely trip starting at Grand Junction on Saturday, March 18, and ending the following Tuesday at Moab. Geerlings tried to do his homework regarding Westwater prior to the trip by writing Ross Musselman, a



known southern Utah guide, about the river. Musselman was not familiar with the river, but he did some homework of his own at the local newspaper office. He concluded there was one dangerous rapid and wrote, "Some boats have gotten through but entirely by accident rather than good boatmanship."<sup>68</sup> Ironically, though Geerlings could not locate anyone who had been through Westwater Canyon, he had, unbeknownst to him, been with just such a person, Bert Loper, a year earlier in 1949 on a Boy Scout trip through Glen Canyon. The Glen Canyon trip was Paul Geerlings's first experience with whitewater, but it was nearly Bert Loper's last because a few weeks later he died at 24 1/2 Mile Rapid in the Grand Canyon, possibly of a heart attack.<sup>69</sup>

Geerlings, motivated by reading accounts of Major John Wesley Powell, chose Westwater Canyon as the first of numerous whitewater voyages because of its proximity, which reduced the time involved so his group would not miss much school. Originally there were about seventeen volunteers to make the run, but as members of the group became aware of their limited knowledge of the canyon and Geerlings's inexperience with whitewater, they gradually withdrew, until only five remained.

Equipped with a ten-man navy rubber landing craft, they ran the canyon when the Colorado was measured just above 3,200 cfs. They had some exciting moments in the rapids including one member falling out at "Cisco Bend" (Skull) Rapid. He held onto a rope and stayed with the raft. Geerlings detailed the experience through Westwater for the *Salt Lake Tribune Magazine*, where he wrote: "We learned that the river made a right angle turn at Cisco bend, but were unable to get any detailed information as to the severity of current either at the bend or below it. Therefore, as we entered the canyon, we anticipated the reported whirlpool rapids with a good deal of enthusiasm but were taken off guard by stretches of comparatively mild water." After a stop at the Outlaw Cave where they discovered a letter dated 1903, they continued.

Back on the river we found the rapids were beginning to justify our expectation. At one point the waves broke over our boat, and we paused momentarily to bail out. We knew that no matter how rough the river might get, we could probably avoid turning over if our bow was held normal to the waves.

But the decision at Cisco was not entirely in our hands, as the river narrowed, a larger boulder obstructed the way, diverting the current into two branches about 10 feet wide. When we saw that the left was gutted with rocks we swerved to the right, but were swept up by the rapids and hurled with tremendous force against the canyon wall. For an instant the swirling water ploughed our port-side beneath the surface, and we clutched at the boat to avoid being washed overboard. Luckily we didn't capsize, and when the current bore us toward an eddy, we paddled furiously to the opposite bank where we bailed out before going on.

However, our troubles at Westwater were far from over for we ran into a series of cataracts where the waves approximated 15 feet. There was nothing to do but keep the bow dead ahead and hang on when the deluge came in.<sup>70</sup>

One might have thought the party, which was comprised of all U.S. Navy midshipmen, except for Richard Sklar, would have felt more comfortable on the water, but afterwards they were described as "six very frightened people."<sup>71</sup> Bruce Martin later recalled that they were fortunate that they "took the trip before the spring runoff, for the rapids would certainly have been worse and perhaps we would not have come through alive."<sup>72</sup> This may have been what many boaters thought until more experience with the canyon revealed that, unlike other sections of the Green and Colorado Rivers, low water in Westwater can demand more skill and attention than high water.

### The Narrow Escape

The leader of the group of six boaters who left Westwater on September 24, 1950, was Theodore Steinway, a member of the famous piano manufacturing family, who had only minimal whitewater experience and an errant government map of the canyon. With him, Dick Durrance (who was world famous for snow sports, involved in building the Alta Lodge in Utah, and started the Aspen Ski Company), Margaret Durrance (professional photographer), Florian Haemmerle (a Sun Valley ski instructor who later became an excellent watercolorist), his new wife Beatrice, and Massachusetts professor John Corley entered the river near the head of Westwater Canyon in three Bavarian Klepper foldboats similar to the one Beppo Saeckler used in



Margaret and Dick Durrance, Ted Steinway, and a farmer at Westwater in 1950. The farmer was likely longtime Westwater Ranch owner Emmett Elizondo. Margaret Durrance photo.

1930, except these were two-man boats.

Because of the low water, Steinway felt there would be no problems in the canyon, but he was immediately surprised: one news item reported they cracked up one of their boats just one mile below the Westwater ranch. A later interview with Dick and Margaret Durrance indicated that two of the three boats were broken shortly after they stopped for lunch. According to their description they lunched somewhere after discovering the Outlaw Cave, so they had traveled more than the one mile first reported. This would explain why they did not return to the ranch, where the terrain would be easier to follow. They were trapped within the walls of Westwater Canyon.

Some of their party had met with known river runner and *Grand Junction Sentinel* editor Pres Walker prior to their departure. The *Sentinel* reported the meeting after the group's rescue, but Dick and Margaret Durrance were not aware of the meeting and claimed the government maps they relied on did not indicate much of a drop in the canyon. They were aware of the fragility of



Dick Durrance (light hat) and Ted Steinway portage foldboat around rapids in 1950. Margaret Durrance photo.

their boats, and had they known of the canyon's steep decline they would not have attempted it. Those who met with Pres Walker informed him that they planned to be two days on the river and arrive at Moab Monday evening.

On Sunday September 24, 1950, Westwater was running at 3,140 cfs. After lunch that day the party lost one of their boats and nearly the life of Florian Haemmerle when he and Beatrice turned over. The upset most likely occurred in Marble Canyon Rapid. Florian was under water wedged into the cockpit of his boat by his backpack, which was stuck between his knees. Eventually he worked himself out, but the incident shook up the honeymooning Haemmerles, and they wanted nothing more to do with the river. Being trapped between the canyon walls with boats that could not take the punishment of the rapids, the party resolved to continue following the river along what little shoreline there was and hike out if possible. They worked both sides of the canyon, crossing the river in the pools below each rapid and

lining the rapids. The foldboats could only hold two people at a time so each time they crossed, they would have to make several trips to ferry everyone and their scant supply of food and water. The Haemmerles remained distressed about the river and were not allowed to ferry across together. According to Dick Durrance they likely camped at Big Hummer and Skull Rapids while trapped in the canyon.<sup>73</sup>

On Tuesday, Pres Walker phoned the *Times-Independent* in Moab to inquire about their arrival, but no one had seen or heard of the boaters. Walker, with his wife Becky, then flew their plane over the canyon but did not see any sign of the group. At the same time L. L. "Bish" Taylor, publisher of the *Times-Independent*, drove along the river but also found no signs of the party. A full-scale search was begun, and on Wednesday two members of the missing party were spotted high on the canyon walls by Harold (Shorty) Pabst, of beer fame, as he flew his plane over Westwater looking for his friends. He reported them as being ten miles downstream of where they started and about five miles above the Frank Shields Ranch.

From the description given in the newspapers and later interviews with members of the group, they hiked out just above Sock-It-To-Me Rapid onto the Big Hole area. The Durrances recalled a rapid just below them and one in the distance that they could hear but not see.<sup>74</sup> Frank Shields, who owned a ranch across the river from Cisco, was asked to help with the rescue and given a general description of where the party was located. He ranged his cattle in the area so was familiar with it and rode his horse to a point where he was opposite them on the south side of the river. He then called down to them to try to continue about one and a half miles further downstream to where he felt he could take a boat upstream and pick them up the following day.

Because of their experiences with outdoor sports the boaters were well prepared for the emergency from the onset. They had only two days' food supply when they began, and once they realized they were in trouble, they immediately started to ration it. This kept them healthy enough to finish the climb. A description of where they were located was given in the *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*: "They got thru all except the last bad rapid—but they didn't realize that. This rapid goes around a bend and they couldn't see that once over it they would be in smooth water for several miles."<sup>75</sup>

The following day Frank Shields pulled his motor boat behind a tractor to the west portal of the granite gorge and motored up the river to where the party was. Two at a time he took them back downstream to safety, food, and friends. The rescue was completed by 9:30 P.M. on Wednesday, September 27, 1950. The river flow for the period ranged from 2700 to 3140 cfs, which was a level similar to what most of the boaters before them had experienced. Probably Pres Walker summed up the experience best when he said, "It was quite a voyage and the only trouble was that there were six people with the combined experience of about 1/2 a boatman. They were all damned nice kids, but they were in just too fast company and too rough company."<sup>76</sup>

### James Rigg

The first successful recorded run of a medium or higher water level through Westwater was completed by Jim Rigg, co-owner of Mexican Hat Expeditions with J. Frank Wright. Mexican Hat Expeditions ran primarily the San Juan, Green, and lower Colorado Rivers. Jim Rigg's first experience on whitewater was with Norm Nevills when he was invited to help with a San Juan River trip in 1949. Rigg's father, a doctor in Grand Junction who occasionally tended Nevills's family, introduced him to Norm. After Nevills and his wife died in a plane crash in 1949, Rigg and J. Frank Wright purchased his whitewater business at Mexican Hat and changed its name.<sup>77</sup>

Primarily, Rigg was a commercial runner, but he did make some runs for the sport of it. On June 6, 1951, he ran Westwater when it was running 14,200 cfs. Rigg was not one for leaving a record of his feats, so most of his experiences were recorded by those who knew him personally or through correspondence. William J. Davis, who boated Westwater a week later, mentioned in a letter that "I ran it in early June, 1951. Jim Rigg ran it about a week before I did. Jim had more trouble than I did. He was push[ed] out of the main current in to a small eddy and he was held there for half an hour. He was nearly upset once in his attempt to get back into the current."<sup>78</sup> Frank Wright recalled Jim telling him of a run through Westwater where he took one sixteen-foot, rigid, cataract-type boat for the run. "Jim told me that the distance through the canyon was relatively short com-



pared with other runs. That what few rapids were available were quite close together and that one of them was a 'stinker' and difficult to run."<sup>79</sup> Just after this run Jim and his brother Bob ran a record two-and-one-half-day Grand Canyon trip that possibly upset river historian Otis "Dock" Marston's scheduled launch promoting motorized crafts as the way to run rivers.<sup>80</sup>

John L. J. Hart made contact with Jim Rigg when planning a 1958 trip through Westwater and recorded in his notes: "Last night I called Jim Rigg who said he had been down the Canyon several times. He said that most of the excitement came in the first mile or so, after the Little Delores. About the last bad rapid is caused by a big rock in the middle of the river which will probably be uncovered by July 5. All the water goes to the right but as soon as you pass the rock, you must turn left into an eddy to avoid being turned over by a granite edge."<sup>81</sup>

Why Jim Rigg or any of the other commercial outfitters of the 1950s did not pursue boating Westwater was best described by his former partner Frank Wright, "My guess would be that preparations and travel distances were extensive. The time spent in rapid running was relatively short and risky and that the type of boat and other equipment that was being used at the time we were running rivers was not adequate, and that prospective passengers were not interested enough to pay for a trip of this kind when other runs were available that offered more for their money."<sup>82</sup> With the improvements of equipment over the next twenty years we are now seeing more than ten thousand commercial and private river runners a year boating Westwater Canyon.

#### William and Mildred Davis

Margaret Durrance and Mrs. Haemmerle may have been the first women to survive an attempted run of Westwater canyon when they portaged their broken foldboats through in 1950, but Mildred Davis was the first female known to have made it through the canyon in a boat. Pleasure boaters William J. Davis, a Chicago electrical engineer, and his fifteen-year-old daughter left Fruita, Colorado, on June 11, 1951, and ran the Westwater rapids the following day when it was running 16,000 cfs. The father and daughter team had previous experience running the Grand Canyon in cataract boats the year before and immediately after



their Westwater run flew to Lilly Park to begin a Yampa trip.<sup>83</sup>

Their Westwater run was only the second trip known to have been made at a higher water level. The Davises claimed to have experienced no trouble in the canyon because most of the rocks were covered, making the river more negotiable. This was a level that had made Big Whirlpool (Skull) Rapid legendary, as ranchmen in the area had watched the channel head directly into a cliff, divide in half with the Room of Doom and another large volume of water that scaled up the cliff some seven to ten feet, then fell back on itself. Fortunate would be any boat that could make it to the left side where the water was calm, and the boaters could shout praises to whomever they wanted or of however they ended up getting away from the ugly stuff.

A common feeling among everyone who runs Westwater Canyon is that there is just enough room for your boat and oars. This was how the Davises felt as they entered the gorge and discovered a rapid path from start to finish. Once, William said, he was submerged as a ton of water buried him, but they encountered no further obstacles as their rubber boat quickly passed through the entire canyon. In a 1953 letter to Peter Sparkes, Davis wrote: "I think you should decide in your own mind that you are going to run everything, and do it without looking anything over," which is true by nature of the steep canyon. And with reference to the many senior boatmen of the 1940s and 1950s, he said "this is a canyon that many river men say that they are going to run one of these days, but generally never get around to it."<sup>84</sup>

#### Charles Bolte and Earl Eaton

By the mid-1950s boating the western rivers became more commonplace, and unless boaters were trying something unusual or met with a crisis nothing was reported of their excursions. One story did catch headlines though in Colorado, where Charles Bolte and Earl Eaton of Aspen decided to motor down the Colorado River from Aspen to Lake Mead in Arizona. The old adage of turning a mole hill into a mountain might best describe how these college students came up with their idea. Neither had ever been on any rapids, and they were only familiar with those near Aspen. From a decision made while skiing, Bolte's desire to

boat the Roaring Fork in the summer soon ballooned into wanting to run all the way to Lake Mead. A young woman who had overheard them talking about shorter runs told them of a trip she made with the Riggs outfitters down the San Juan and how dangerous Cataract and the Grand Canyon were. Probably a little pride and a lot of beer helped them decide to go all the way, and from that point they spread the word they were going.<sup>85</sup>

Too late to back out, Bolte and Eaton prepared for the smaller, more technical rapids with a small boat, and for the larger section of river, they presented *Driftwood*, a large bridge pontoon that they launched at Colorado Springs. Another unique aspect of this voyage was that they used a motor. This had been done in the lower canyons before but not for the length of river Bolte and Eaton planned to travel. Theirs would be the first known motorized trip through Westwater Canyon.

Their start was rough as they ripped a hole in *Driftwood* on the first day. Down the river they went, gaining experience along the way. From what was told them their first real test would be in Westwater, where they arrived on the tenth day. Charles Bolte's journal records the following two days.

Day X [May 7, 1954]

We got a late start—10:30 o'clock, and were all the time eagerly awaiting the notorious bad rapids of "West Water." Crossed the Utah border at about 1:30 and went about 6 miles into West Water Canyon. No bad water at all—a few large riffles. The customary head wind came up at about eleven, but dissipated about 2:30. The canyon is narrow and deep slow moving water for the most part.

Have a campsite overlooking beautiful desert-canyon scenery. We are in what is called "Little Hole" on a flat grassy area about 20 feet above the river. According to map we are 50 river miles from Moab. Expecting bad rapids tomorrow—expect to get an early start for a change.

Day XI [May 8, 1954/3,580 CFS]

Westwater Rapids

Glorying in the hot morning sun while we crawled out of our sleeping bags, we slept soundly until 8:30. After having breakfast, we spent (an other? hour rearranging our cargo—[illegible]? Then off! Almost immediately we found ourselves in a deep narrow gorge—the river only about 75 yards wide at the widest area. Almost immediately we hit some fair sized rapids, but motored through them

flawlessly. It was great fun—and we were screaming and yodeling like kids with a new toy.

At noon we hit the famous rapid which is reputed to be quite bad. It narrowed in quite sharply and the white water followed close to a sheer wall. We went in it fine—the breakers from the bottom to top being about 12 feet high. Doing fine until one tremendous breaker grabbed the back end of the boat and flipped it into wall—breaking a large hole in the motors drive shaft housing. The boat floated through smoothly (as expected) but we were out of power and Earle's oar flew off of the boat.

We fortunately avoided the huge right whirlpool, however, and continued to float without any more docking on the further rapids. We went over one boulder—fall ten feet high without trouble, then a huge explosion wave engulfed me on the front end nearly threw me between the boat and the canyon wall which we immediately hit. I hung on with one hand, my feet in the water, to a safety rope which I constructed that morning, for dear life & pulled myself into the boat. Driftwood did very good work—it made the whole operation seem mild.<sup>86</sup>

On July 8 they reached Lake Mead with a record run that may have only been surpassed on the Colorado River by Bert Loper, who thirty-eight years earlier made his historical run with Ellsworth Kolb. Loper had claimed to have been on the Colorado from just above Glenwood Springs all the way to the Gulf of California.

#### Ed Hudson and Ed Nichols

On the register that once was located at Music Temple, now buried beneath the waters of Lake Powell, the story is told of yet another historic event. On June 1, 1955, it reads,

Ed Hudson and Ed Nichols Paso Robles Calif non commercial voyage in the good ship "Finally" Glenwood Springs to Lees Ferry. Left Glenwood May 23. This trip completes about 1400 miles of consecutive miles on the Colorado River for Ed Hudson (Glenwood Springs Colo to the Gulf of Lower Calif.) all with motor driven craft. Westwater canyon was roaring fast and rough. Cataract at #24 swamped us and thru us into rocks on Right bank. Got out in 7 hrs.<sup>87</sup>

This was possibly the end of records for the longest run of the Colorado River. Except for the unplanned trip by Eaton and Bolte, nobody else had attempted to continuously run the entire



Westwater Canyon upriver from Skull Rapid photographed from the bench above the Room of Doom.

length of the Colorado. By now dams were going up and giving credit to anyone for running the entire length of the Colorado River, continuously or in segments, could be disputed, in a manner similar to the asterisk that so long stood next to baseball's Roger Maris's home run record that broke Babe Ruth's but in more games. Who can we credit for having run the longest stretch of the Colorado River? What criteria do we use? If we use the untamed Colorado River prior to the construction of Hoover Dam, only Elmer Kane, Ellsworth Kolb, and possibly the trapper Parley Galloway (who we know experienced major rapids beginning at Skull in Westwater and ending at the now submerged Separation and Lava Cliff Rapids beneath Lake Mead) are contenders.<sup>88</sup> Bert Loper didn't transit the Grand Canyon until 1939, yet he claimed to have done the entire Colorado River beginning at Glenwood Springs. Or do we consider those who came after the dams? Otis "Dock" Marston would have given the record to Bolte and Eaton, but the next year Ed Hudson claimed it. In 1974 yet another party, calling itself "River Love," put onto the Colorado River at a higher elevation than any of the predecessors did. River Love consisted of members of the Smokey Knowlton

family from California. They started their trip at Kremmling, Colorado, and eventually made it to the disappearing Colorado River at the Gulf of California.<sup>89</sup> It is difficult to give credit to anyone for the accomplishment since none of them ran the complete unbridled Colorado River.

The “good ship ‘Finally’” that Hudson and Nichols ran in was a converted river boat that was sixteen feet long with a five and a half-foot beam running a sixty-five horsepower Jeep inboard motor. This was the first known craft of this sort in Westwater, though Hudson, Nichols, and Dock Marston had been experimenting with them in the early 1950s on the Grand Canyon. Ed Hudson recorded the Westwater Canyon event in his journal dated May 24, 1955.

Then we entered Westwater Canyon, and what a ride we were in for! It was a canyon of mystery to us as all we could get about it was that it was all bad, but all stories were vague and ominous. No wonder!

First signs of danger showed up in the form of a lot of black granite spires and rocks standing upright in the river, and we wound our way through them in fast water but no bad rapids.

A short distance later we come into walls of black granite and the fun started. Bang! We are into the canyon and no way out but straight ahead. Then followed one hour, or 17 miles, of the most concentrated rough water I ever saw. I’m sure glad I have had river experience before, or I’d never have been able to make it out the other end. Just one rapid after the other, and no breaks, all downhill, and fast.

When we came to the Little Dolores River, the canyon was about 75 feet wide and blocked across with large, partially submerged, boulders and no tongue or channel. We were on it before we realized that there was no sensible way through. I made a quick decision, gave the boat the gas, said a quick prayer, and away we sailed through the air and made a perfect landing on a wave on the downstream side.

A short time after this flying episode the hazards came to an end and we had smooth water ahead. I wouldn’t believe it, but no more rough water showed up. Pulled into shore and dried out.<sup>90</sup>

Westwater was running at 13,700 cfs that day.

Les Jones

Judging from fragmented research, I believe an ever-growing number of boaters successfully navigated Westwater during the



Joe M. Lacy took photographs from a plane of all of the Westwater Canyon rapids in anticipation of running the canyon in kayaks. This aerial photo of Funnel Falls was taken April 13, 1961. Joseph M. Lacy photo courtesy of Mayme Lacy.

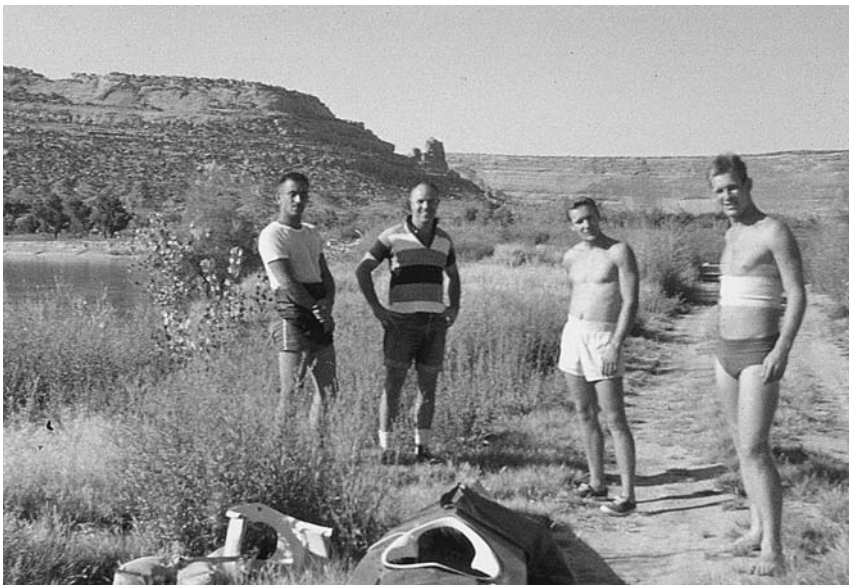
late 1950s. While acknowledging a few important runs thereafter, I generally end the Westwater journal for river navigation at 1955. Les Jones did, however, run Westwater with some fellow workers in the spring of 1956 to develop a river map of the canyon. His scroll maps were waterproof, and he provided diagrams of how to run difficult rapids. A predecessor to the popular Belknap river guides, Jones's maps were no less popular during the early 1960s. The history of his original scroll-mapping expedition of Westwater is detailed in the next chapter.

#### Kirschbaum, Lacy, Martins, and Young

No evidence has been presented to dispute that the first kayakers to run the popular canyon were Walter Kirschbaum, Joe M. Lacy, Ulrich Martins, and Ted Young, on the weekend of August 16, 1962.<sup>91</sup>

Using a diagram found in a *Boy's Life* magazine as a guide, Joe Lacy built his first kayak when he was approximately fourteen years old. With a large irrigation ditch behind his home at





The first known kayakers through Westwater were, from left to right, Walter Kirschbaum, Joe M. Lacy, Ted Young, and Ulrich Martins. They ran Westwater Canyon on August 16, 1962. Joseph M. Lacy photo courtesy of Mayme Lacy.

Canon City, Colorado, Lacy became fascinated with boating at an early age and would become one of the premier kayakers in Colorado. Kayaking solo and occasionally with friends who used a rubber raft, Lacy did not have the companionship of fellow kayakers until the Salida races started on the Arkansas River in 1949, when kayakers came from Europe to compete. It was during the Salida races that Lacy became friends with many of these foreigners, mostly from Germany, as they found a common language called whitewater. The European arrival for the Salida races also made American boaters more aware of the sleeker crafts that dominated the annual race.

In the early 1960s Joe Lacy moved his family from Denver to Grand Junction, Colorado, where he became city manager. His interest in whitewater continued, and he felt the need to become more familiar with the Colorado River near his new home, including the notorious Westwater Canyon. Unaware of anyone who had previously boated Westwater, Joe Lacy with a friend from Denver flew over the canyon on April 13, 1961, taking sequential photographs of the canyon from the plane to prepare





Ulrich Martins watches Ted Young run Funnell Falls on the first kayak trip through Westwater Canyon on August 16, 1962. Joseph M. Lacy photo courtesy of Mayme Lacy.

for a future run. Frightened by what he observed from the sky, particularly at Skull Rapid, he approached his kayaking friends from the Salida races and coaxed Walter Kirschbaum, Ulrich Martins, and Ted Young to join him the following year.

Kirschbaum, Martins, and Young were fearless boaters and would have descended the entire canyon without stopping were it not for Lacy, who admittedly was scared to death and used his camera as an excuse to scout the rapids. He said:

The biggest thing I remember was those guys were all hot shot kayakers Kirschbaum, Ted Young and Uly. Man, they never stopped to look at a rapid, you know, totally strange river and they're ready to go. And I stopped at every fricken one and I got out there, I had my camera under the guise of taking a picture of them and whatever. All I really wanted to do was look at that rapid before I started in it. Every one! It worked, and that's where the pictures came from.<sup>92</sup>

And stop he did. Lacy took photographs of the somewhat irritated kayakers running nearly every rapid in the canyon and along the way they named each of them.<sup>93</sup> Still his greatest fear throughout



Walter Kirschbaum entering Skull Rapid on August 16, 1962. Joseph M. Lacy photo courtesy of Mayme Lacy.

the canyon loomed near the end where he recalled his anxiety from the year before when he studied Skull Rapid from an airplane.

I'll tell you I don't remember ever being as scared as we were heading down to Skull. I knew it was coming up and once you got close you could see that Room of Doom back there. And figuring your way around in that and I was about to shit my pants, I'll tell you. And when I finally got in and scooted around that left side. I had never paddled so damn hard. Paddle on the right.<sup>94</sup>

Although he was not the first kayaker in the Grand Canyon, Walter Kirschbaum was the first one to run all of the rapids. He did so in 1960 after the Park Service required that he prove his whitewater abilities before they would grant him permission to enter the canyon. He was a champion kayak racer from Germany who moved to Salida, Colorado, in 1955 after changing his boating interest from racing to river exploration.<sup>95</sup> Kirschbaum admitted that Joe Lacy "urged" him to participate on the 1962 Westwater trip to "help him down" it and that the four of them "had a ball running it."<sup>96</sup> Of the trip Kirschbaum confirmed that "everyone ran every stretch of river and there wasn't a single tipover."<sup>97</sup> In his letter to John L. J. Hart he emphasized that the

1		MAGAZINE
2	L-R WALTER	NO.
3	KIRSCHBAUM, J. LACY, TED	SERIAL
4	YOUNG, ULRICH HARTENS	
4+5	"REASSURANCE" RPD	
6		
7	"HALF-SHOT" RPD	PIX APR 13, 1961
8		
9		
10		
11	LITTLE DOLORES RVR	RDNG 2.95
12	L.D. HUMMEL" CAVE	
13	"SURPRISE" RPD	
14	"FIRST STAR" RPD	
15		CANYON
16		
17	"LUSCIOUS" RPD	
18		
19		RDNG 8.2
20		
21	"BIG HOLE" RPL	
22		
23		RDNG 8.2
24		
25	"DELICIOUS" RPD	
26		
27	"ONE MORE TIME" RPD	4/9 16, 1962
28		
29	"FAT LIP" RPD	
30		
31		17
32		
33	CASTLE VALLEY	
34	PIX AUG, 1961	
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36	KETSVILL HAS	

Joe M. Lacy's slide register may reveal not only the names that the first kayak party through Westwater assigned the rapids but also a name of one of the previous Outlaw Cave occupants. Courtesy of Mayme Lacy.



Left to right, Kim Crumbo, Dee Holladay, Senator Frank Moss, and Canyonlands Superintendent Bates Wilson, 1971. After Holiday River Expeditions took Senator Frank E. Moss through Westwater Canyon, he introduced it for consideration under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Kim Crumbo, guide for Holiday River Expeditions, wrote articles about Westwater in the early 1970s and later became a ranger at the Grand Canyon. Photo from Holiday River Expeditions courtesy of Dee Holladay

most “fascinating” part of the 1962 trip was their discovery of Outlaw Cave.

The following summer Walter Kirschbaum, the director for the Colorado Rocky Mountain School, a private coeducational school located in Carbondale, “took 44 boys and girls, and some 16 faculty and wives and little children” down Westwater in motorized pontoon boats; only Ulrich Martins was allowed to kayak on the trip. Kirschbaum was assisted by boatmen working for “Moqui Mak” (Moki Mac) who he said didn’t have much experience with rocky water and busted up “several motors.” Short of motors, Kirschbaum prided himself on being able to handle one of the “big pontoons by canoe paddle.”<sup>98</sup> The Colorado Rocky Mountain School returned to Westwater a few years later and introduced the canyon to larger groups. By 1966, Dee Holladay, owner of Holiday River Expeditions, claims his company and Ron

Smith, owner of Grand Canyon River Expeditions, were offering the first commercial river trips through Westwater.<sup>99</sup> It was nearly fifteen years later before other commercial river tour company owners began estimating that the risks involved with boating the short canyon—including the type of equipment and time involved—could interest paying customers.

### Following the Pioneers

Since 1955 traffic through Westwater has continually increased. Today there are more than ten thousand river travelers each year. Coinciding broader changes in technology in the past fifty years, the equipment used for recreation has improved tremendously. Until 1950 no one had been through Westwater on a rubber raft. The heavy wooden boats came in various sizes and shapes and could not hold more than a few passengers. With the continual improvements in plastics and rubber, whitewater rafting, both private and commercial, has become considerably safer for the thousands of people who spend their energy and money to see a little piece of our remaining wilderness on rivers such as the Colorado through Westwater. Today, just as in the time of Elmer Kane, Ellsworth Kolb, Bert Loper, and the others, we can describe the descent into the gorge thusly: "The trouble is that it is a narrow granite canyon where you cannot land to inspect each rapid. You start down and have to go on through hoping for the best."<sup>100</sup>



Whirlpool (Skull) Rapid, 1916. An old Westwater resident said fishes' brains are spattered on the wall at this rapid. Grand Junction photographer Frank Dean was responsible for taking moving pictures of Kolb and Loper's run. Ellsworth Kolb photo, Kolb Collection, Cline Library, Special Collections and Archives, Northern Arizona University.



## Skull Rapid

When you look downstream from midway through the canyon, the river seems to come to a dead end. It is restricted by large fallen boulders, causing a long, tremendous rapid that crashes directly into a steep granite cliff. This is Skull Rapid. Although Skull is nearly the last rapid in Westwater Canyon, its location can be recognized almost from the beginning of the three-mile gorge. Continually in view, Skull becomes progressively more intimidating until it has the same effect as hearing the “da-dump, da-dump” warning in the movie *Jaws*. You know something bad is going to happen.

Fortunately, there is an opportunity, unlike at many of the other rapids in the narrow gorge, to scout Skull Rapid from the shore. Unfortunately, the southern shoreline is strewn with large Precambrian boulders that are slippery and hazardous when making the short hike to overlook the rapid. Additionally, docking the boats can be precarious, depending on the water level. During mid- to high-water levels a strong current brushes against a shortened, rocky shoreline above the rapid, making it difficult to land and, of greater concern, to position one’s boat after scouting the rapid. The popular Skull run begins on the opposite side of the river, and when the currents are strong, it is difficult to get across the river without getting sucked into the whitewater prematurely.

As a novice boatman running Westwater for the first time in 1978, I was asked to watch over three boats while the more





Skull Rapid and the Room of Doom.



During low water, some boaters choose to avoid encountering an exposed rock in Skull Rapid by running along the left shore. Photo courtesy of Kyler Carpenter, BLM.



Boat getting pummeled by the hole at Skull Rapid.



Catching air rising out of the hole at Skull Rapid.

experienced guides scouted Skull Rapid. At that time, the Colorado River through Westwater was running approximately 20,000 to 28,000 cfs. Although seasoned, the guides were unfamiliar with Skull Rapid during these higher water levels; their experience came from the previous year when a severe drought caused the Colorado River to run low all summer. Because the current was extremely strong and continuously tugged at the boats, particularly the supply boat, the guides cautiously used two lines—one to tie the boats to the shore and another to tie each of the rowing boats to the larger supply vessel.

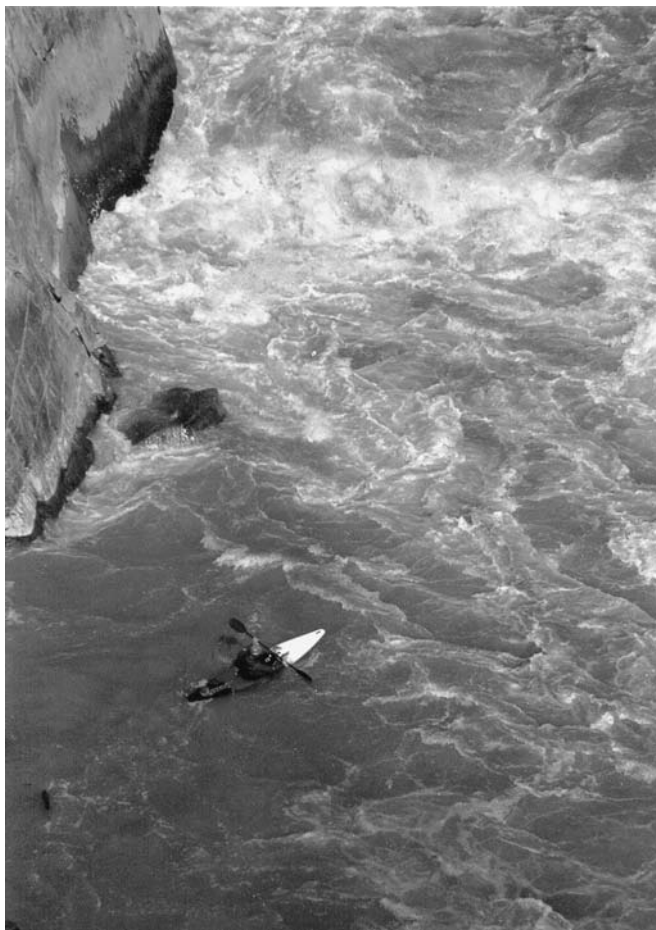
As an additional precaution, I was asked to remain with the supply boat and power it into the shore using a motor. The guides and most of the passengers then hiked to the rapid overlook while I remained behind. Not long after they left me, one of the main lines snapped in the tugging current. Frightened and inexperienced, I waited for what seemed an eternity hoping that the remaining line wouldn't snap and force me to run the boats through the unseen rapid below. Fortunately, the remaining line held long enough for the guides to return, and because they didn't like the looks of Skull, they decided not to take the passengers through the rapid. Gratefully, I accepted the assignment to lead them in a hike around.



Scenic shot of Skull Rapid.

While in transit we stopped to watch each of the guides run Skull. One guide positioned his boat at the head of the rapid and, as he neared the whitewater, dove to the floor. I'm certain he prayed for the successful outcome that he no longer had any control over. I felt fortunate not to run Skull the first time I went through Westwater, and I'm surprised I continued boating after my initiation to it.

The sound of Skull Rapid is deafening, and observing it is frightening, especially in the mid-teen water levels, when the hole is large and the current crashes into the cliff. All of the water



Kayaker in the Room of Doom viewing the thunderous Skull Rapid.

funnels to the right side along a cliff worn sheer by water eroding rock for millions of years. The current surges forward into a huge hole midway through the rapid; approaching it can best be described as looking into the jaws of a hungry lion. Deep, explosive, and practically unavoidable, the rapid doesn't allow boaters much room for error. Next, directly in front of the current, past all of the ugly stuff in the middle, the river crashes into a cliff that splits the channel. To the right, the river enters a fierce whirlpool that has cut nearly a circle out of the granite formation; this is called the Room of Doom.

Invincible against other types of erosion, the Precambrian rock at this rapid has not given way to the river entirely. One remaining cliff firmly makes its last stand against the force of water. A former Westwater resident whose father ran cattle at Big and Little Holes described his memory of Skull Rapid years later: "There is one place about half way down the canyon where the river goes completely under a cliff, this is a portage place as well as the whirlpool."<sup>1</sup> Although the river may have looked like it disappeared to cowboys observing from above, it actually crashed off the cliff, then continued its trek to the Gulf of California.

Skull is not just any rapid; it is one of the notable ones. No matter how much experience boaters have had running rivers, they all seem to have some fear of Skull Rapid. A little diarrhea, a sudden need to take a leak (even if they just took one), or maybe just stomach queasiness are all discernible signs of a boater's respect for Skull. It would be ludicrous for them not to fear the rapid, with the legend it's maintained for over one hundred years. Dock Marston once said of the Grand Canyon, "Now if you are going to run a trip down that canyon and you are the leader, I give you this advice, and you must follow it. You must be afraid, to begin with; if you're not afraid, you're dangerous. But you must not let any person in the party know that you are afraid. Because if you do, then those members of that party, or anybody that you convey that information to, will lose confidence."<sup>2</sup> Marston's words ring true for Westwater as well.

Other rapid names in Westwater Canyon sound like amusement park rides: Sock-It-To-Me, Bowling Alley, Big Hummer, Wild Horse. Skull is an exception that has earned its name. It was first christened in the spring of 1956 when five young boaters from Salt Lake City spent the night in the canyon. A reconstruction of their experiences as related to me in an interview with Roger Green in 1986 follows.

When it was nearly dark on the cool Friday evening of March 23, 1956, Leslie A. Jones parked his car in front of the gas station at Cisco, Utah.<sup>3</sup> With him were his brother-in-law, Klaus Axman, and four friends from his job at Western Steel Company: Roger H. Green, Rulon C. Briggs, and Paul H. Hurd. All were from Salt Lake City. Although boating the Colorado River enticed Les's friends to accompany him on the long trip, his primary objective was to map Westwater and diagram its rapids.



From the late 1940s through the 1950s, whitewater boating increasingly became a popular recreational sport. Commercial river companies began to flourish, taking paying customers down popular stretches of river such as through Glen, San Juan, and Grand Canyons. It was during this growth that Les Jones began producing “scroll maps” to sell to a new generation of river runners. The scroll maps were designed to be easy to use and were the equivalent of the current Belknap River Guides, which are used by many boaters for the Colorado and Green Rivers. This would be Les’s first descent of Westwater to research the rapids for his Granite (Westwater) Canyon scroll map.<sup>4</sup>

While the group was at the gas station, Les asked a Cisco resident for directions to Westwater and told him that he intended to take boats through the canyon the following morning. Les and his friends were not prepared for what happened next. The Cisco residents became concerned for the group and tried to discourage them from attempting to boat the canyon, relating the familiar theme that only one or two people had survived the canyon before.

The year before, in 1955, Roger Green had come to Utah from New York, where he recently had been discharged from the air force. He intended to go to college in Oregon but stopped temporarily in Salt Lake City to reevaluate his decision. Under the G.I. Bill, Roger went to work for Western Steel Company as an apprentice draftsman. It was at Western Steel that he met Les Jones. Roger was unfamiliar with whitewater boating and was immediately impressed by Les’s reputation and from the numerous river stories and adventures he recounted.

Les Jones had begun his river travels in 1953 working for his cousin Don Hatch, of Hatch River Expeditions. As it established itself as a commercial outfitter, Hatch River Expeditions ran primarily the Yampa and Upper Green River, with some trips through the Grand Canyon, including possibly the first commercial baloney boat run there. According to historian Roy Webb, Les was disenchanted by the large commercial crowds and inflatable crafts and did not last long as a commercial guide. He then designed his own whitewater boat, using an aluminum canoe rigged for oars and putting bulkheads and canvas over the openings, and traveled in smaller groups or solo. Some of his more notable trips he made solo. Once he traveled from Moab to Hite



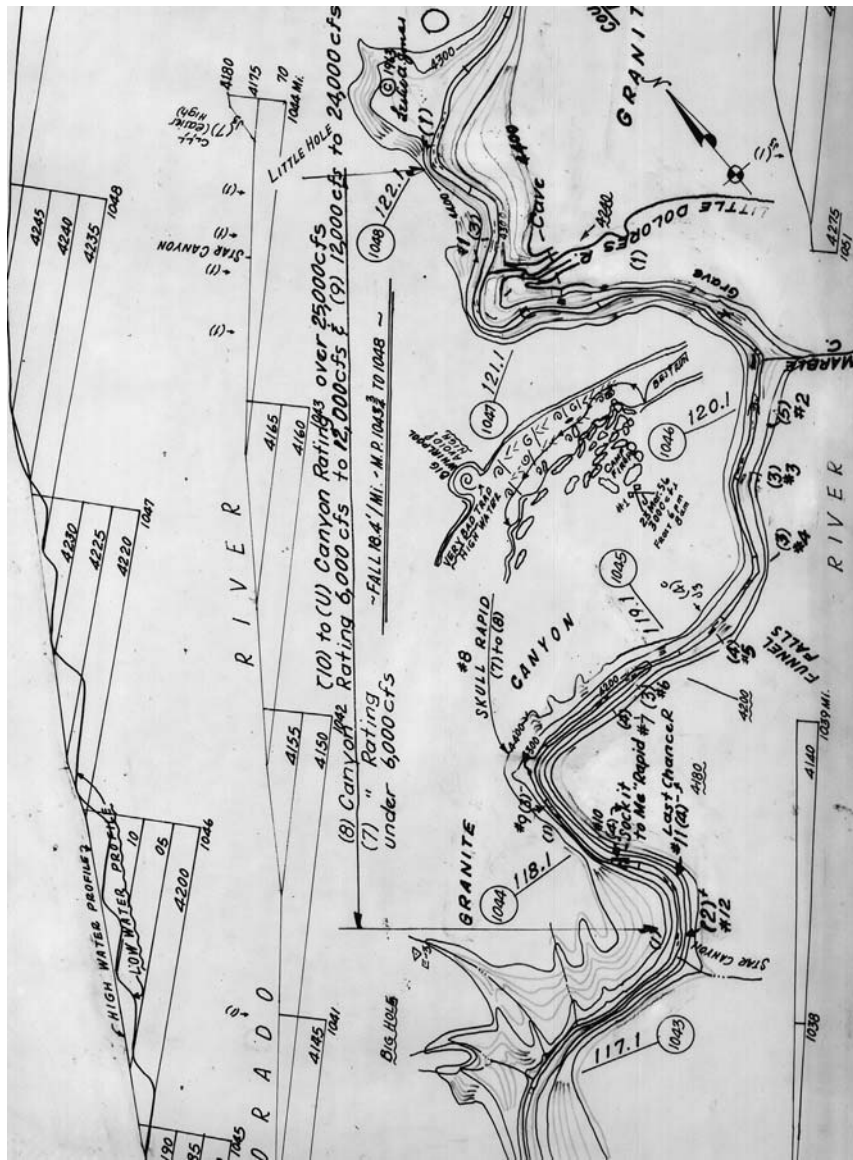
in thirty-six hours, and once he made another speedy trip from the Gates of Ladore to Split Mountain in ten hours.<sup>5</sup>

Probably the most notable solo trip he made was through the Grand Canyon. It had been done before, but this time Les Jones was going to make motion pictures of the event. He “got a football helmet and bolted a lard can on top of that. He had a window in the front of that lard can and then he had a mount in there for a motion picture camera. Then he had a tube coming down out of that with a bulb and he put that bulb in his mouth and he could start the motion picture camera with this by squeezing the bulb and then he would stop it by squeezing the bulb.”<sup>6</sup> The weight of the helmet was too much though, and at 24 1/2 Mile Rapid Les almost “lost it” when he capsized and the heavy helmet held him down. Recovering from the near tragedy, he continued as far as Bright Angel Creek, where he stored his boat. A year later he returned without the helmet and completed the trip. Historian Dock Marston refused to credit this as a solo run since Jones stayed close to a Hatch commercial trip that second year. Afterward, Marston unkindly referred to him as “Buckethead.”

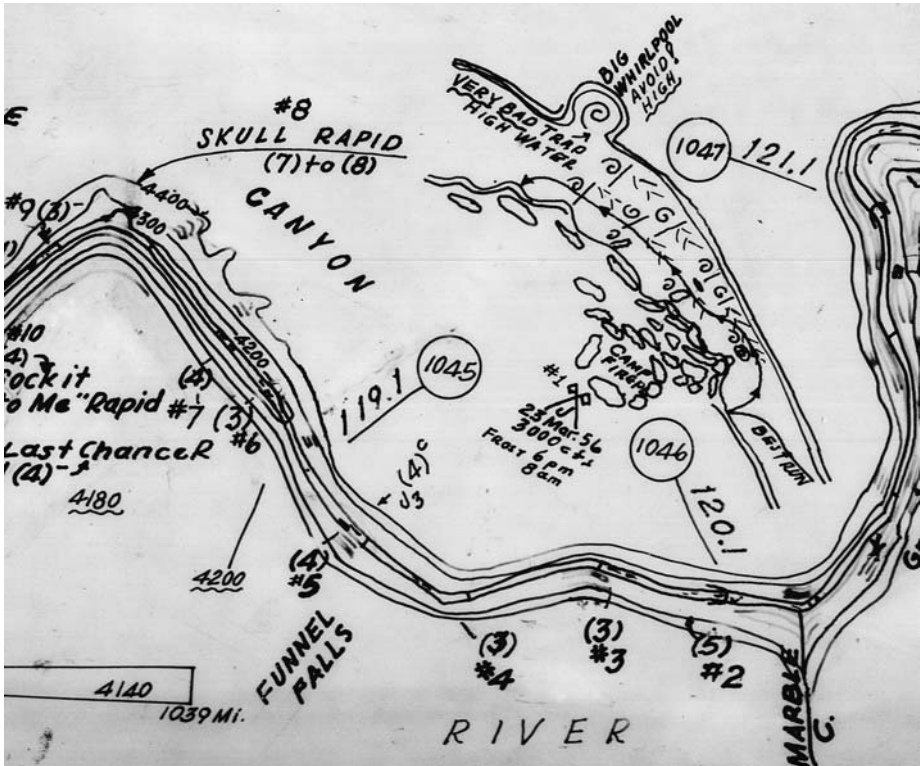
It was after dark on that Friday night when Jones’s group arrived at Westwater after approximately an hour of driving from Cisco. The night air was cool and the only sound was that of swift water moving past the hard beach-like area they had selected as their point of departure. Anxious and tired, Roger spread out his sleeping bag and got in. Staring up into a star-swollen sky, he listened to the river rush by and pondered the warnings given by the Cisco residents earlier that evening. The continuous sound of the river soon diverted his angst, as his mind focused on its melody until he was asleep.

The following morning Roger’s sleep was interrupted by obnoxious bleating all around him and the other boaters. Each man poked his sleepy-eyed head out of his sleeping bag to discover what seemed like four hundred sheep grazing amongst them. The humor of the moment dispelled any fears left by the comments of the night before. Soon they were preparing the boats for the river trip.

Roger was assigned to run a Gruman aluminum canoe with Klaus Axman, while Les Jones, Rulon Briggs, and Paul Hurd manned a raft. Jones was the only member of the group who had



Les Jones's scroll map of Westwater. Courtesy of Les Jones.



Close up of Skull Rapid notes from Les Jones's scroll map.

any previous whitewater experience. He walked over to where Roger was preparing to take his position in the canoe, told him how to run it, then, without saying anything, pulled out a knife and strapped it in front of Roger. After Roger and Klaus seated themselves, Les tied some canvas around them to keep water out of the cockpit of the canoe. Then, like an old river gentleman, he told them that if they tipped over and couldn't get out, the knife was to cut their way out. As he walked away, they could hear him chuckle. Roger was uncertain how to interpret the knife comment, and for a moment he was concerned about it being there. Still, with Les leading the way, Roger and the others pulled away from shore and started enjoying a leisurely ride down the Colorado River.

They traveled along a two-mile bend, becoming familiar with their boats. The time during this slow stretch was comfortable

and fun. The raft and canoe stayed close together so the boaters could talk, tell a few jokes, and loosen up. The Colorado River was running low, 3,330 cfs at Westwater, and the narrowness and height of the canyon were intensified. The raft crew took motion pictures of the canoe as Roger and Klaus successfully ran a few small rapids at the head of the canyon. At times the canoe seemed to disappear from sight and then crashed through a small wave, dramatizing the actual drop.

Everyone was having fun until at one point they looked up, and on top of the Wingate sandstone cliffs, about 800 feet above, stood several spectators looking down at them. The boaters felt like ancient Roman gladiators looking up at Colosseum spectators who had already, the evening before, given them a thumbs down. Again a touch of fear briefly entered Roger's thoughts, and then he ran another rapid and everything was forgotten. The boaters began to think that maybe it would not get any more difficult. Still, Roger thought it odd that the Cisco residents would assemble on top of the cliff to watch them.

Making no stops along the way, they continued deeper into the canyon. Halfway through, the river briefly widened and the current slowed considerably. The men were disappointed, thinking the canyon would soon end, but then, as they slowly drifted westward, the canyon narrowed again into yet a deeper slit in the earth. The black cliffs rose ominously straight out of the river to a height of 200 feet. Ahead in the gorge was a fierce-looking rapid with granite boulders sitting in the middle and dividing the current. Leading the way, Les chose the primary channel to the right, and both boats followed the tongue of the rapid into large waves that made for a more exhilarating ride than they had experienced upstream. But the first major rapid still awaited them downstream.

At higher water levels the Colorado River flushes through the canyon, and there aren't many places between the steep cliffs to land a boat. At low water some shoreline existed above the next, clogged rapid for the boaters to land their boats and inspect the scene. They walked up a steep talus slope until they overlooked the rapid. Although rough looking, the rapid was not as abrupt a drop as they originally thought. Still, its large lateral hole was menacing and would require a more precise entry than the rapids above had demanded. Les, noticing the excellent view

from their scouting point, decided to have Roger and Klaus remain on shore to film the raft running Funnel Falls.<sup>7</sup>

Les, Rulon, and Paul returned to the raft and prepared themselves for the run. Anxiously they adjusted their life jackets, picked out their route, and pushed the raft into the current.

On shore, Roger focused the movie camera on the raft as it entered Funnel Falls Rapid. The canyon was so narrow that the men on shore were looking almost directly down into the raft when it floated by. As the men in the raft approached the head of the rapid, they were to the right of their planned entry, and as they attempted to reposition the boat, they found themselves dropping into the rapid at an angle to a large lateral wave coming from their left. Suddenly the boat capsized, and Roger stopped filming and began counting heads to make sure everyone was accounted for. Two men were floating with the boat, but one person was missing. Shortly afterwards, the boat and two swimmers also disappeared from sight.

Desperate to help, Roger and Klaus ran to the shore where their canoe was docked. After seeing what happened to the raft, they decided to line the canoe along the shore past the rapid. Although the Precambrian rocks were difficult to climb around, the canoe met little resistance as they lined it into an eddy. They got into the canoe, paddled it through the tail of the rapid, and continued downstream about an eighth of a mile, where they found Rulon and Paul stranded on a small rock outcrop.<sup>8</sup> A little further down they also picked up Les.

Roger was especially relieved to see Rulon Briggs, who he assumed had drowned. Roger had not seen him after the accident because Rulon had been trapped under the overturned raft. Fortunately, nobody had been injured, but one of the capsized boaters was not himself.<sup>9</sup> In a state of shock he frantically tried to scale a sheer wall to escape the river. The other boaters watched his futile efforts, and eventually persuaded him the river was safer. Someone suggested that they say a prayer to assuage their fears. The others were not certain of Roger's faith, though, and asked him if he wanted to pray with them. He answered, "What do you think I've been doing for the last hour?"

Wet and cold, the party continued until dusk, when they heard the familiar loud crashing of a rapid ahead of them.

Because of the darkening canyon the boaters could not see from the river how large or technical the rapid was, so again they landed their boats at a rocky outcrop to scout ahead. Together they stumbled over the rocks and, upon observing Skull Rapid, immediately agreed to camp for the night. They hadn't planned on spending the night so they didn't have any sleeping gear, and the food they brought had been lost when the raft capsized.

Only under extreme circumstances would anybody choose to camp at Skull Rapid. Camping at the large rock peninsula in the heart of the rapids was an indicator of their fears. There are no flat or sandy areas to sleep on, just large, irregular boulders strewn throughout the narrow peninsula. The fledgling boaters had lost faith in Les's ability to get them safely through the canyon, and unfortunately, Les didn't know anymore than they did about what to expect further downstream. Now they wanted off the river. The encroaching darkness chilled the air and kept them from drying out. Cold and exhausted, they brought the raft onto the rocks and positioned it like a lean-to for shelter.<sup>10</sup>

While the boaters huddled beneath the improvised lean-to, Roger decided to look for firewood. He searched the lower end of the outcrop where he expected wood would settle amongst the rocks whenever high water receded. The area he searched is identifiable to boaters who have been there by a large, house-sized boulder nearly directly across from the Room of Doom. When Roger was approximately twenty feet upstream of this large house rock, he spied an intact skeleton under another large boulder about ten feet from the river. His first thought was that the remains belonged to the last poor devil who had tried to boat the miserable canyon. In these strange conditions, finding a human skeleton did not seem significant to him; he thought it was not unusual in the Wild West. He casually returned to gathering wood and eventually returned to the other boaters still huddled beneath the raft. When Roger mentioned finding the skeleton, the others became excited and asked him to show them where the corpse was.

The completely intact, bleached skeleton had no observable clothing or identification near it. Because there was no skin or hair attached to it, the boaters estimated it had been there for twenty, thirty, maybe even forty years. A couple of the men began

toying with the skeleton. One of them picked up the skull and placed it on a rock overlooking the rapid, while another picked up an arm bone, threw it into the rapid, and christened the torrent "Skull Rapid."<sup>11</sup> At this point it occurred to them that perhaps they had done something wrong, and they ceased playing with the bones and returned to their small fire next to the raft.

Uncomfortable and cold, most of the boaters couldn't sleep, and the sound of the thundering rapid reminded them throughout the night of what they would have to contend with the following morning and that there were likely more rapids to follow. Only Les Jones slept; Roger described him as being like a rattler curled up on a rock. If their fearless leader seemed to be in his element, nobody else was, so their questions about his ability to help them escape the rapids unscathed grew. After all, he hadn't had any answers the previous day when they capsized, and he was as unfamiliar as they were with the canyon. Their respect for Les's boating skills hadn't diminished; their concern was the unknown river before them. If, as the Cisco residents told them, only two or three boaters had ever survived Westwater Canyon, what other demonic rapids might be downstream? Les had traversed legendary rapids in Cataract and Grand Canyons, but he didn't know what to expect. Their thoughts resembled John Wesley Powell's less than a century before as he entered the Grand Canyon: "We have an unknown distance yet to run, an unknown river to explore. What falls there are, we know not; what rocks beset the channel we know not; what walls rise over the river, we know not."<sup>12</sup>

The frosty morning camp on March 25, 1956, was quiet.<sup>13</sup> Cold and frightened, Rulon and Paul had decided they wanted out as soon as an opportunity presented itself. They were not anxious to get back onto the river, but there was no other choice. Roger did not remember the boaters running Skull the next morning, but even portaging or lining the boats did not alleviate their fears of impending rapids below. Somewhere downstream of them they could hear another rapid. After bypassing the newly christened Skull Rapid, the party headed downstream but did not travel far before finding an escape route near Bowling Alley Rapid. At that point, Roger decided to leave the canyon with Rulon and Paul, while Les and Klaus remained on the river with the two boats.



The weather was hot when the three men hiked up Trail Canyon at Big Hole. Lost, but happy to be off the river, they didn't know how far from Westwater they were, and they were hungry and thirsty. Without a map and unfamiliar with the region, they walked atop the high Wingate Cliffs, hoping to follow Westwater Canyon back to where they had begun the trip the previous day. Mile after mile they trudged. At a few spots along the way they found mud pots and, cupping their hands, skimmed as much moisture off of the top to drink as they could. One of the men wanted to stop and sleep for awhile in the shade but was persuaded to continue walking in hopes of finding clean water and some food. As they neared Westwater Gulch, they found an abandoned shack, likely belonging to sheep herders, and clean water in a rain barrel designed to capture and store it. They arrived at their vehicle and food after a ten-mile hike.<sup>14</sup>

On the return home to Salt Lake City, Les Jones reported the skeleton find to Mrs. Carolyn Seeley in Cisco, who dispatched the information to Sheriff John Stocks of Moab and the local newspaper. The *Times-Independent* reported: "The men said they had passed over eight of the rapids when one of them discovered the rib torso. The upper part of the skull was found a short distance farther downstream from the 'barrel' part of the skeleton. The jaw bone of the skull was missing," so perhaps the bones had not been completely intact.<sup>15</sup> Several sources suspected the bones were those of a forty-eight-year-old Salt Lake man, Kenneth Shipp, who had drowned a year earlier in a fishing accident in Westwater Canyon. Roger Green didn't believe the bones belonged to a man who had only drowned a year earlier because of their bleached and fleshless condition. It would also seem improbable that Shipp's body could be ten feet above the river where Roger Green discovered the skeleton since Westwater was running 4,400 cfs when he died on July 30, 1955, and between his death and March 24, 1956, when Les Jones's party camped at Skull Rapid, there were only four days of a higher water volume, the maximum being 5,000 cfs.

For nearly two weeks Sheriff John Stocks attempted to hike into the canyon to search for the skeleton, but bad weather and poor access to the reported area kept him away. Jimmy Walker, who later became a Moab commissioner, had previously hiked

into the canyon through Little Hole around 1947 with a rock club, and now offered to help Sheriff Stocks with the search. Entering the canyon at Little Hole, they hiked down to the river carrying a small aluminum boat to search both sides of the river. The two of them spent the day examining both banks up to Marble Canyon and back with no success, but they did discover the cave now referred to as "Outlaw Cave."<sup>16</sup> The only bones they reported finding were those of sheep. Their search did not include the three-mile inner gorge where the skeleton had been discovered because, according to Jimmy Walker, the description given by the boaters did not indicate they would need to look there.

Former resident John Malin, who from 1955 to 1957 periodically visited Westwater while mining uranium nearby, claimed that the skeleton was later found and had a watch, wallet, and a .38 caliber revolver with it. He did not recall the identity of the skeleton or where it was located.<sup>17</sup> However, Malin likely confused the skeleton reported at Skull with another skeleton that was located at Big Hole in 1975.<sup>18</sup> Les Jones's scroll map changed the name of "Big Whirlpool" Rapid to Skull. On his map he shows a campfire in the rocks at the head of Skull rapid and the date, "23 Mar 56, water running 3000 CFS and Frost 6PM to 8AM."

Eighteen years after Roger Green experienced the terrifying Westwater Canyon, he ran across an article in the *Deseret News*, dated June 20, 1974, about the canyon. The article presented some history—mostly incorrect—and referred to the author witnessing a twenty-four-foot "J" rig capsizing in Skull Rapid. It was the first time Roger realized the name of the rapid had been changed from Whirlpool to Skull. Making a note to the side of where the article named Skull Rapid, Roger drew an arrow to the name as if wanting somebody, someday, to recognize his party for naming it. Roger wrote:

Named "Skull Rapid" because of human skeleton found below rapid by Roger Green while he was looking for fire wood in 1956. His party had also turned over in this rapid and was building a fire to dry off and get warm.<sup>19</sup>

## The Memorial

And how do you spell relief? It's when you get past that damn Rapid. Although Skull is the most feared rapid in Westwater Canyon, it is not the last. Following quickly in succession are Bowling Alley, Sock-It-To-Me, and Last Chance Rapids, all of which can be formidable during various levels of water. Still, they seem insignificant after overcoming Skull Rapid.

Immediately after Skull is Bowling Alley. A popular rapid for kayakers during extremely low water levels, it gradually flattens out as the river's volume increases. Still, the fiercest I ever saw Bowling Alley was on June 28, 1983, when the Colorado River through Westwater was running 59,700 cfs. At that level Bowling Alley would not be considered a rapid; however, half the channel there was a huge whirlpool that rose above the water level, spinning itself upward like an inverted tornado.

Besides being a good ride in low water, the right hand shore above Bowling Alley Rapid is one of the few places in the inner gorge where boaters can hike out of the canyon. Three members of Les Jones's 1956 party escaped the canyon's remaining rapids by hiking out there. Who knows how many others have used this route to the top to either escape or to rescue boaters trapped in the Room of Doom at Skull Rapid.

Although 59,700 cfs was the highest flow at which I experienced Westwater, every water level below it presents a different canyon to run. Many river maps and commercial river running pamphlets, even as late as 1982, claimed that the canyon was

unrunnable at levels above 30,000 cfs. Then, during several seasons of high water in the 1980s and 1990s, many rafting parties braved the canyon and discovered otherwise. When the Colorado River flows above 40,000 cfs, the rapids, except for Funnel Falls and sometimes Skull Rapid, are washed out and replaced with whirlpools, and in some cases the canyon proves to be uneventful. It is difficult to visualize Skull Rapid at 59,700 cfs, where the boulder-strewn left shore is completely buried underwater and there is no rapid. At that same level, Funnel Falls has huge rollers that run nearly to Skull Rapid. There seems to be little chance of tipping or falling out of the raft, but if one did, the whirlpools could be worse than any other experience in the canyon.

At Sock-It-To-Me Rapid the best water is when it's running medium to low. During those stages you encounter numerous kayakers spending time enjoying the powerful hydraulics, performing endos, or surfing it. Boaters wanting to get the most out of the rapid must prepare to make a fast exit as the current leads them directly into the edge of a cliff referred to as the magnetic wall, where boats can get trapped in a strong eddy pinning them to the wall.

Last Chance is the last chance to mess up. The huge boulder at river right seems larger than the one at Skull and will create problems for the unwary who think the hump created by the rock is smaller than it actually is. The fairly short rapid forces boats left into a sharp edge of Precambrian rock. There, the rock divides the current into two eddies. The smaller, yet stronger eddy ferries boats upstream against the northeast cliff and regurgitates them back into the tail of the rapid. To the west the eddy is much larger but not nearly as strong and leads to freedom from the confining canyon walls. Or is it freedom?

Beyond Last Chance Rapid the river mellows, and except for a few small riffles and eddies, the excitement is over. After successfully negotiating the inner gorge, solace takes over. The canyon becomes serene, the only sounds coming from the boaters themselves as they anxiously reflect on their running of Skull that day. Beverages are now passed out because it's unlikely anybody has had any since they entered the gorge. Relaxed, boaters find their attention forced to their canyon surroundings. Many boaters haven't paid much attention to scenery through the

inner gorge as they focused on rapids, holes, whirlpools, and rocks. Yet, the shaping of sandstone by wind, rain, ice, and water has created some unique forms along the river.

Nearing the bend at Big Hole and looking upstream, one can see an arch located above Star Canyon, which enters the river from the south just below Last Chance Rapid. The arch doesn't seem to have an official name. A former Westwater resident said it was simply called Star Arch, after the canyon it stands above. In the early 1960s, John L. J. Hart, an attorney and explorer from Denver, Colorado, hiked up to the arch from the river. He described it as looking like a large open door, thus he named it Door Ajar Arch. On one of the walls was an inscription of "Paialius 1929."<sup>1</sup> This was probably a Basque sheepherder, not a fellow river runner. Later one of the early researchers of Westwater history, Kim Crumbo, coined the name Wingate Arch in a short article he wrote.<sup>2</sup>

Big Hole is one of few known escape routes out of the canyon, through the bottom of Trail Canyon. As previously mentioned, bootleggers reportedly ran a still in Big Hole. Also, Westwater resident Elwood C. Malin grazed his cattle at both Big Hole and Little Hole at various times in the early 1900s. By 1928, John A. Johnston and Annas Dolph of Cisco had their angora goats grazing at Big Hole.<sup>3</sup>

There is an inscription at Big Hole that simply says "CAMP." The inscription could be attributable to cowboys or sheepherders who regularly grazed there, or it may have been carved in 1916 by the Kolb and Loper Westwater party, who set up a camp somewhere in the canyon.<sup>4</sup>

About a mile below Big Hole is a fairly secluded campsite at Big Horn. The last good campsite within Westwater Canyon, it looks deceptively small until you draw closer to inspect it. Possibly the only complaint the site generates is about ants. If the ants are not a problem, there are plenty of good bedding spots and a great kitchen facility overlooking the river. Here the river is quiet and the night peaceful. I recall a night at this campsite listening to an elderly passenger, who claimed to have a repertoire of over three hundred songs, sing Hank Williams tunes through the night. That night under a full moon the old man sat alone on a point overlooking the Colorado and without an instrument beautifully sang sad, lonely songs to the river.

Not far beyond Big Hole the Precambrian slowly disappears beneath much younger sandstones. The first bald eagles known to nest along the Colorado River were sighted in this area in the early 1980s. More recently a total of three pairs have been reported nesting along the Colorado in the vicinity of Westwater. There are only six known nesting sites in the entire state of Utah. Although I have seen bald eagles in northern Utah, the experience of seeing them in Westwater Canyon for the first time etched the deepest impression; several boaters and passengers also considered that eagle sighting one of the highlights of the entire trip. The eagles seem to dominate their environment as they soar so high that they become barely discernible; and to think that up there they can clearly observe the boaters they hold spellbound hundreds of feet below. It doesn't take much imagination to know why our country chose the bald eagle as a national symbol. As it effortlessly soars overhead, and we inch closer to the takeout, we can thank God we have a few places like Westwater to set us free.

By the time boaters reach Agate Wash there are few remaining signs of Westwater Canyon's existence. The land levels considerably, and only a few outcrops of sandstone emerge periodically along the river. Near Cisco landing, in the vicinity of Rose Ranch, one outcrop of sandstone stands out, and at its base near the river stands a small memorial. Unless boaters are floating near the outcrop, the memorial can easily be overlooked. Similar to the numerous flowers and crosses that are scattered along our nation's highways to designate where lives have been lost, the memorial represents a life lost in the rapids of Westwater Canyon.

The memorial was placed there on November 15, 1971, one year to the day after the "lost deer hunter," C. R. Sherill, disappeared and was presumed dead as the result of capsizing his boat in Westwater Canyon. It marks the spot where for some time after he was reported lost, nets were stretched across the Colorado River to try to snare Sherill's body and those of two of his deer hunting friends, Robert Hubbs and Franklin LaMar Greenbalgh. One year after they drowned, only Sherill's body remained missing, and it was presumed it never would be recovered. After a memorial service that was presided over by a Catholic priest, followed by a military salute, the quartz headstone was placed strategically at the location where many man hours were

spent watching the river for three lost friends and loved ones. The inscription on the stone reads,

CHARLIE RAY  
"C. R."  
SHERRILL  
BORN JAN. 11, 1943  
LOST IN WEST WATER  
CANYON  
NOV. 15, 1970.<sup>5</sup>

It was late afternoon on November 15, 1970, when middle-aged Rex Christensen stumbled onto the Rose Ranch near Cisco landing. He had just traveled, hiking and swimming, approximately eight torturous miles along the Colorado River beginning from deep inside Westwater Canyon's gorge. Alone and frightened, Rex sought help finding the three hunting buddies he had last seen in the canyon above. He told Mary Rose about their boating accident in Westwater, and she called for emergency assistance in finding the three missing men.

Taking advantage of the last weekend of deer hunting, Sherill, Hubbs, Greenbalgh, and Christensen had headed for Westwater to hunt the northwest border of the Dolores Triangle. The Dolores Triangle has been known to produce large deer, and what better way to get to them than by raft? Loading their pickup truck at Green River, Utah, with a seven-man raft Sherill recently helped purchase, life jackets, and beer, the four men set out for the canyon.

Temperatures were mild for mid-November, ranging between 50 and 65 degrees during the day. The Colorado River through Westwater was running at 5,580 cfs, a level where most of the rapids in the inner gorge are significant. The men had some experience on whitewater, having hunted the lower part of Gray Canyon on the Green River a week earlier. But Gray Canyon's rapids were nothing compared to what they would experience in Westwater. Whether they expected much of the same one can only guess, but their actions leading up to their accident would indicate that they didn't take the canyon seriously enough.

The primary question that left everyone scratching their heads was why the men left their life jackets behind in the pickup





Memorial to C. R. Sherrill, the lost deerhunter, located upstream of Cisco landing.

truck. A letter by Mary Rose to Dee Holladay, January 5, 1971, reported what she had heard from Christensen: "They had a small rubber raft, 2 large deer and four big men besides their guns—and the foolish part of it all they left their life jackets in their pickup at Westwater. All had been drinking for two days before and was drinking the day they drowned." The drinking of course may have affected their judgment; it is certainly unwise for anybody having any knowledge of Westwater Canyon to make such a grave error as to leave behind life jackets. The hunt was good and the men bagged two large bucks at Marble Canyon, just above the Westwater gorge.

That same Sunday morning, November 15, 1970, after cleaning the deer and tying their carcasses to the small raft, the four men pushed their boat away from shore and jumped aboard. The raft undoubtedly would have been strained from the weight of the men and two deer. The canyon above had not presented any problems for them and, like many others before, they likely misjudged what was ahead. Overloaded, the small raft probably was difficult to manage going into Marble Canyon Rapid, and once they entered the gorge there was no turning back. They continued downstream, led by the current of the river for a short

time before their raft was upset at the rapid known as Big Hummer.<sup>6</sup> There, all of the men were thrown into the cold Colorado River and the hydraulics in the deep canyon pulled the men underwater, holding them as long as possible. Bobbing to the top and grasping air, Rex Christensen managed to swim to the shore and grab hold of a rock. Exhausted and cold, he pulled himself out of the river and looked for his friends. He saw, briefly, only Robert Hubbs, who clung to the overturned raft floating downstream toward Funnel Falls.<sup>7</sup>

How depressed and frightened Rex Christensen must have felt as he stood alone on a narrow shoreline in the deep Westwater gorge. Though it was shortly after noon, the mild temperatures likely were not enough to warm the drenched survivor. Rex's repeated calls to his friends went unanswered. Only his voice and the sound of rapids could be heard; he was on his own. Reluctant to leave his friends, Rex eventually recognized that they needed help and he had to find it. Working downstream he was able to find a place to hike out of the canyon and then continue downstream for several hours to the Rose Ranch.

By Monday, the Grand County Jeep Posse and "many citizens of Green River, as well as the Emery County Jeep Posse were on hand to aid in the search" for the missing men.<sup>8</sup> Don Harris, a famous Colorado river man and distant relative to Robert Hubbs, hiked in from the lower end of the canyon, while planes, boats, nets, and shore searches enveloped the area.<sup>9</sup> No sign of the men was found except for C. R. Sherill's jacket twisted wrong side out, indicating he may have slipped out of it while attempting to swim, and the raft with both deer still tied to it.

Throughout the winter everyone was on the lookout. The nets remained up near the Rose Ranch, and another net was set up near Moab, but it was not until the following May that any of the bodies showed up. On May 19, 1971, Robert Hubbs's body was found about two and a half miles above Dewey in the river.<sup>10</sup> Later that same month, on May 29, the body of Frank LaMar Greenbalgh was located nineteen miles below Moab by members of the annual Friendship Cruise.<sup>11</sup> The body of C. R. Sherill remained lost, and any hope of ever finding it dimmed with each passing month. It seemed to fit what Clyde Eddy said of the Colorado River in his 1927 classic, *Down the Most Dangerous River*: "Its water is so heavy with suspended sand that it rolls

along like a river of quicksilver, sweeping everything irresistibly before it. When men are thrown into the stream their clothing fills with sand and the very weight of it drags them down to death. Then the cruel and cunning river hides their bodies in backwaters in its lonely canyons and covers them with sand, burying them there forever.”<sup>12</sup> But Sherill’s body was finally located in a pile of driftwood on high ground approximately seven miles above Dewey on February 29, 1972.<sup>13</sup>

Although the memorial was erected for C. R. Sherill, it serves as a remembrance for others, named or unnamed, who have lost their lives in the canyon above. Prior to 1955, all of the boaters who lost their lives remained anonymous, but on July 20, 1955, Kenneth Shipp died while fishing for catfish in Westwater Canyon.

Shipp was from Salt Lake City, Utah, and had been working in Colorado with the Grand Mesa Roofing Company when he was invited to go fishing on the Colorado River with fellow employees E. R. “Jack” Miller and Glenn Yearout, both from Grand Junction. They apparently intended to boat down to the Cisco pump station, where they were supposed to be met the following Sunday. They seem to have had just a faint idea of the distance to Cisco or the difficulty in reaching it.

According to Miller and Yearout’s testimony, they had traveled one and one-half to two miles below Westwater Ranch when their boat struck a rock wall at a sheer curve. The boat was about half full of water after the incident, but it remained upright and Miller and Yearout did not feel there was any danger at that point. Kenneth Shipp panicked though. Thinking the boat was sinking, he jumped out, causing it to overturn. Shipp held both of the oars in his hands and tried to tread water, but after a short time Miller and Yearout saw him go under water, and then only the oars surfaced. They believed Shipp had succumbed to a heart attack while in the water because he was known to have a bad heart. Miller clung to the boat and was swept an estimated eight to ten miles further downstream where he righted the boat after it stopped in an eddy.<sup>14</sup> He then hand paddled to the north shore. He spent the night on a large rock fifty feet above the river. Then the following morning he climbed up a slide approximately three hundred feet and headed downstream toward Cisco.

Glen Yearout was considered a good swimmer but was exhausted when he reached the south shore not long after the accident. He later said, "I know that river. I expect my fear of that river is what saved me." He did not move for some time after reaching the shore. Once rested, he clung to the rocks and worked his way upstream until he could find a place to climb out. Then he continued upstream toward Westwater, where he saw a paint crew for the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad working on the opposite side of the river. They were able to hear his shouts for help and rescued him. He said, "My greatest battle was after I got out. You just can't describe something like that."<sup>15</sup> From his description of the accident it was assumed he was the only survivor until the following day when Miller was located about twelve miles below Westwater Ranch. No reports have been found as to whether Kenneth Shipp's body was ever recovered. As mentioned earlier, some suspected the skeleton that Les Jones's party discovered a year later was Kenneth Shipp.<sup>16</sup> In any event, another Westwater memorial was erected.

For the spring 1969 edition of *Utah Historical Quarterly*, historian P. T. Reilly wrote an article entitled "How Deadly Is Big Red." He had researched the Colorado River from Cataract through the Grand Canyon and listed all of the reported deaths that came as a result of that stretch of river. Cataract has been labeled the "Killer of the Colorado" for many years, yet the dubious honor may well belong to Westwater.<sup>17</sup> Even the first recorded mention of Westwater Canyon, from Frank C. Kendrick in 1889, referred to it as "Hades Canyon where the woman drowned."<sup>18</sup> Later, in 1916, residents tried to get the sheriff to prevent an elderly Swede, Paul Adams, from traveling the canyon in a boat because of its demonic reputation.<sup>19</sup> Then when Kolb and Loper accomplished their transit of the canyon, they made headlines in regional newspapers, one of which stated "some twenty venturesome travelers" had gone to their death in Westwater Canyon. Although the newspapers didn't provide any supporting facts or names, the statement emphasizes the reputation of the canyon.<sup>20</sup> Not long after Kolb and Loper, several area residents claimed a young woman drowned while boating with two men when their boat capsized at the Big Whirlpool.<sup>21</sup> It is quite likely that more boaters entered Westwater Canyon than

either Cataract or Grand Canyons because of its proximity to settled areas. Like Elmer Kane in 1888 and Frank Barnes in 1921, there may have been many unsuspecting miners and trappers who entered the canyon, with only a few exiting it.

For many years, Westwater Canyon retained a notorious reputation that only one or two boating parties had ever survived it. Considering the small number of successful boaters through the 1950s, the mortality rate truly would be extremely high if all of the reported deaths were true. Westwater's sinister reputation continued through the mid-1950s, as locals regularly warned boaters of the numerous tragedies in the canyon, but no specific tragedy was recorded until Kenneth Shipp drowned there in 1955.

As boating the canyon gradually increased in popularity, the number of reported deaths also increased. The victims included Robert Baird Millard, age twenty-seven, who in July 1968 was pulled into the river while trying to line his boat past the "severe rapids,"<sup>22</sup> and the trio of deer hunters in 1970. On May 13, 1982, Mike Cromer was ejected from his boat at Surprise Rapid; his body found the following day.<sup>23</sup> That same year on June 27 we were reminded that river guides are not invincible as Matthew Zinkus of Partners River Program sustained injuries and died when his raft overturned at Funnel Falls Rapid.<sup>24</sup> Then on August 31, 1983, two more casualties occurred, as the tricky waters at Skull claimed Milan, Italy, vacationer Luigi Boyl and Pauline Lambert in separate boating accidents.<sup>25</sup>

Pauline Lambert is my mother. Reporting her accidental death is difficult. I would prefer not to, but it has eternally connected me with Westwater Canyon. "Pete" wasn't even supposed to be in Westwater. She was frightened of water so I wanted to take her on a Desolation Canyon, Green River, trip. Short of vacation days from her work at Cottonwood Hospital in Salt Lake City, she chose the shorter river trip through Westwater. I wanted to show her what I had been doing for five years.

On August 31, 1983, the Colorado River through Westwater was running at 7,280 cfs. It was a fun water level for being in the canyon. There were five boats in our party; one was sent ahead at Outlaw Cave to take photographs of the other boats going through Skull Rapid. My boat was designated the sweep boat and

followed the others through the canyon. The Rogue river boats we used were made of a heavy, durable material and seemed to be extremely stable. They had bigger tubes that reduced the amount of water we took on in rapids. We felt we had the safest boat on the river.

As expected, all of the boats made it safely through all of the rapids above Skull Rapid. Then we spaced ourselves out to run Skull. I don't recall watching the other boats; my focus was on how I should run the rapid. I would have loved to make an aggressive run but decided instead to run it conservatively, going right to the left to catch the far left side of the hole. My entry was going as planned, and as I was straightening my bow for the edge of the hole, a large, unexpected hydraulic exploded on our left. Nearly as soon as I saw the surge develop, we flipped. I didn't believe we had flipped until I found myself underwater. I felt like I was being pulled down. I didn't know which direction was up. Eventually, my life jacket brought me to the surface beneath my overturned boat. Making my way to the outside, I found two of my four passengers holding onto the side of the boat. Shortly afterwards I heard my stepfather Ben repeatedly hollering for Pauline.

Mom was nowhere to be seen. I looked for help from my fellow boatmen, but only one boat was near us. I was agitated because there was not more help. At the time I was unaware that one of our other boats had also flipped and was being assisted by a third boat. We were short handed. It was the first time I recall us flipping boats in Westwater. My two rescued passengers and I were pulled out of the river onto the one boat that waited for us. I held onto the overturned boat as we searched for my mother. Shortly we saw the back of a life jacket above Sock-It-To-Me Rapid. Believing the life jacket was a loose spare, the guide hesitated leaving the overturned raft to go to it. I volunteered to remain with the raft so they could investigate. They ferried to the jacket and discovered my mother floating face down. She was still alive; they said she was still breathing, they said she was talking. I then was separated from them when my overturned boat was swept into the rapid. She held on long enough to learn that her husband and I were safe.

The count has since continued, and although these tragedies represent a very small number compared to the multitude of

boaters who have descended Westwater in recent years, they do remind us of the respect we should show for the canyon.<sup>26</sup>

How many other lives the Sherill memorial represents is unknown. Perhaps we need a new memorial that is a tribute to the vitality of Westwater Canyon itself, which retains its character because of the few who persistently fight to keep it pristine, not allowing it to be marred, who have understood what a few days here can do for one's psyche. Not all our precious wealth comes in the form of oil and gold or silver; some of it is in our desire to taste freedom, if only for a couple of days enjoying Westwater Canyon.



## Epilogue

Flat open space dominates the scene as one approaches the landing at Cisco. Canada geese generally gather on the small gravel islands upstream of the landing and on the farmland across the river. A few years ago the landing was dirt and mud; now it is a large concrete slab that makes derigging easy as boats and equipment can be thoroughly cleaned and easily loaded onto trucks. The conveniences are improving, with parking and toilet facilities at both the put-in above and take-out below. What is important though is the distance between these two points, which continues to allow us to experience wilderness on this stretch of the Colorado River.

Ironically, we have become the tourists that Westwater residents invited to the region, hoping to develop it and thereby survive in it. Although we came late, we are coming in droves through their magnificent back yard—Westwater Canyon—and like them, we hope to preserve the canyon for our posterity. Had we come sooner, perhaps we might have injected life into their economy and shared a special relationship with the residents. Certainly we would have enjoyed their stories of the region. But this was not to be, the town at Westwater faded into obscurity and gifted us with their solitude. Like them, we wake up to the sound of coyotes yapping at dawn, trains passing throughout the night, and Colorado River water slapping at the shores and we thank God that we have places like this to visit. Perhaps they didn't leave.

During two exploratory Westwater trips in 1998 and 2000, my colleagues and I were able to experience the canyon anew. One trip took us to a half mile inside the Utah border where we searched for evidence of Charles Brock's dugout. We studied old and new maps and read newspaper descriptions while trying to pinpoint the location of the dugout and recreate the scene of Captain Davis shooting Brock and his gang in 1892. Although our search was unsuccessful, we discovered plenty of evidence of human activity in the area. One member of the party even found what looked like the door to an old iron stove, with the name "DAVIS" inscribed on it.

The next morning as we floated toward the Westwater launch we discovered a large unidentified circular object lying flat on the river bank in the vicinity of a Champion Water Elevator that was used for irrigation and identified on an 1894 survey map. Further downstream we stopped at Westwater Creek and, after a struggle with mud and tamarisk, found a very faint pictograph. The area was rich in historical remains, including a rock panel with numerous names inscribed on it. Most of the names didn't belong there and were fairly recent, but others had been inscribed by former cowboys and residents of Westwater, including E. C. Malin. There was also an old sheep-shearing yard with numerous sheds and corrals that extend between fifty and seventy yards and were likely built by former Westwater Ranch owner Emmett Elizondo or by J. W. Hardison, who in the early 1930s tried to rescue Westwater's dwindling economy. The site is on private property and is not accessible without permission of the owner.

In addition to Wild Horse Cabin there are other historical structures in the vicinity. At Little Hole, instead of just the customary march up to the petroglyphs, we briefly combed the area looking for evidence of a bootlegging operation or copper mine. At Big Hole we found the barrel rings and the "CAMP" inscription. We left such discoveries intact for professional archeologists to interpret.

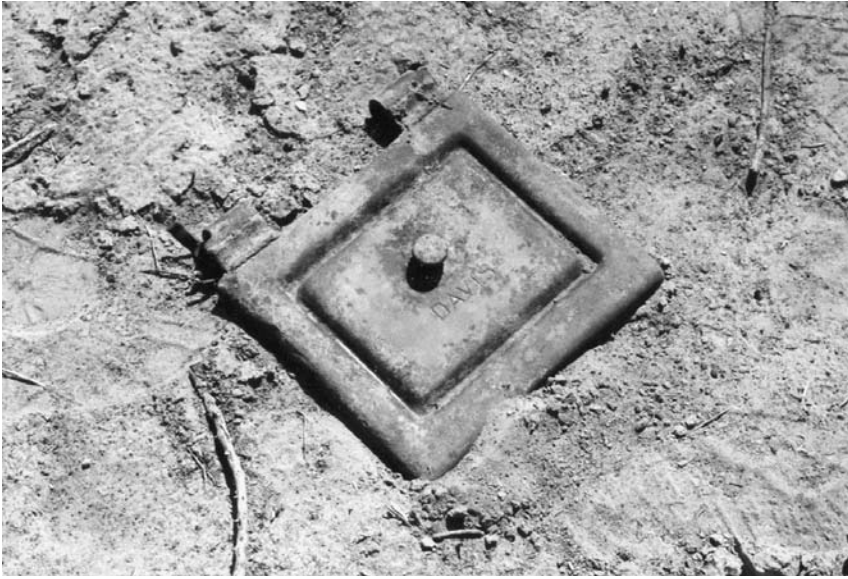
One morning while camped at Little Dolores, in preparation for the inner gorge rapids, our group read the 1916 Kolb and Loper account of their Westwater experience titled *Trip Thru Westwater Canon Was Like Tickling Dynamite with a Lighted*

*Match—Wow!*<sup>1</sup> The exaggerated descriptions they gave of the rapids, and particularly of Skull (Big Whirlpool) Rapid, entertained us. One guide suggested he wanted to begin a tradition of using the article on river trips just before tackling the whitewater.

These are new experiences we had with what had been to many of us unknown canyon history. The region came alive as we identified the human activity in each area we visited. From the state border to the takeout at Cisco, we imagined the goings on of a Westwater world that has been forgotten. The vision began before historic men and women arrived, then took on the elements of an old western movie, and continued to the time of the Great Depression. Can we ever look at Westwater the same?

Imagine 500 to 1,000 railroad workers in the valley spiking down railroad ties for the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. Visualize the small obscure town at Westwater during the next drive along the railroad tracks on the way to the launch. In the town is a gas station, a store, a small hotel, a railroad station, a school, and a large sheep-shearing plant, with several section houses and ranches along the road. At the river there are additional ranches scattered upstream and downstream, and there's Owen's graveyard and a sanitarium. What about the dirt road you drive in on? Is it part of the old Salt Lake Wagon road built in 1858? At the launch, while making your way to the river to see what it's running, imagine mounted Ute Indians crossing the Colorado River just upriver, traveling north and south between mountain ranges. Or imagine an earlier Archaic or Fremont Indian hunting party at Little Hole with bow and arrows—or perhaps an atlatl—stalking bighorn sheep.

There are fingerprints that people historically left at Westwater and that we are now identifying. Many details are missing but there is a foundation of clues for further research. It is highly unlikely that we have a complete chronology of Westwater boaters, and because the area was isolated, we may never find anyone else to add to the list. What we have though is the beginning of a long overdue awareness of the history of the upper Colorado River. Boaters' earlier experiences with the river are invaluable for modern river runners. Knowing that boaters fear the canyon now—with all of the specialized equipment, maps, and accumulated experience with whitewater—we can



What resembles an old stove door is inscribed with DAVIS. Ironically, the door was found near the Brock dugout site.

begin to comprehend what went through the minds of early boaters once they entered the gorge and realized there was no turning back.

Westwater Canyon has an exciting natural and human history that should not be ignored. We should not lose the opportunity to grab and save what little information still exists pertaining to Westwater. It is in these few places on earth that we still feel, because of a shared experience, within reach of those who traveled our route before. Each river trip recreates a pioneering experience, with new encounters and situations for each cubic foot per second change in the river. We can ride the roller coasters at 6,000 cfs and sweat from fear at the possibility of getting trapped in the Room Of Doom at 15,000 cfs. Our chances of successfully running the canyon have improved because we are more familiar with it after years of cumulative experience, but we are still prone to accidents and in the grasp of uncertain adventure once the steep black cliffs force us to go forward.

The history of the Green and lower Colorado Rivers has been extensively studied. The wonderful accounts and interviews

completed over the years by men such as Robert Brewster Stanton, Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, and Otis “Dock” Marston have left us with much knowledge. But they paid little attention to the upper Colorado River and its tributaries above the confluence with the Green. Westwater Canyon has had a legendary reputation since the first written reference to it, in 1889, which described it as “Hades Canyon where the woman drowned.” For many years, though, accurate information on the canyon was hard to come by. Now, seventy-five years after Westwater’s heyday as a small railroad town, most of those who then wandered the canyon by trail or boat have passed on. It is now that we need to preserve what we know about this place, before Westwater’s history recedes into legend or dies with the former inhabitants.

## Appendix A

### Ellsworth Kolb and Bert Loper, 1916

*The Grand Junction Daily Sentinal*, September 28, 1916, carried the following report of Ellsworth Kolb and Bert Loper's historic run of Westwater Canyon:

TRIP THRU WESTWATER CANON  
WAS LIKE TICKLING DYNAMITE WITH A  
LIGHTED MATCH—WOW!

—  
KOLB AND LOPER MASTERED WILD WATERS  
AFTER GOING THRU EXPERIENCE THAT NO MAN ACCOMPLISHED  
BEFORE  
—

Snapping Their fingers under the very nose of Death itself, taunting gaily with the grim reaper, with their marvelous river skill as their only defenses, Ellsworth L. Kolb of Grand Canyon, Ariz., and Bert Loper of Torrey, Utah, succeeded Monday and Tuesday in conquering the ferocious and roaring cataracts of the Grand river in Westwater canon, 40 miles west of the city.

They ran thru millraces with death as their nearest companion many times and just when it seemed they had joined the ranks of the men who had tried to run the rapids and died in the attempt, they would bob up and crawl back into the careening canoe and dash into the teeth of the next death trap, and finally conquered the mighty stream.

The boat, a 17-foot cedar freight canoe with hatch covers over each end, was only capable of holding one passenger, while the other member of the expedition ran the picture machine. The plan was to change off and each have a chance at shooting the bad places.

The canon is 12 miles long, with five miles of mad waters a sheer bottle-neck gorge with granite walls 400 feet high. At the top of the granite wall on each side is a wide bench, above this bench towers the sandstone 500 feet more. Along the bench a trail meanders and from various points along this trail it is possible to obtain glimpses of the rapids below and also possible at a few places to climb down to the edge of the river. Down such places the photographers planned to descend to picture the various stages of the trip, which was to take two days.

A few miles from the start of the canon is one place where it is possible to reach the river edge with horses and here it was planned to make a small camp.

With Kolb besides Bert Loper were Frank E. Dean of Grand Junction, photographer, William Stubbs a cattleman and Ed Herbert a deputy sheriff from Westwater, Utah. They witnessed portions of the wild trip from such perches as they could obtain on the granite cliffs. They were armed with long ropes to hurl to the river rider in case of dire need. Mr. Dean operated the movie camera.

Kolb and Loper started out to conquer the first series of rapids, six in number all of them snorting geysers of river anger. Kolb says Loper is the most ardent lover of river sport he has ever met. He started in the craft and mastered the first few rapids each one being worse than the last, while Kolb, camera in charge, stayed on the bank. Dean had started ahead along the plateau to meet Stubbs and Herbert to strike camp for the night leaving Kolb and Loper to take pictures of that series of rapids. It was then that the death grapple with the river began.

Kolb shouted orders to Loper in the river below, from where he was situated on the rocky walls of the canon. He saw Loper run the first two, then the third and fourth. Each one got worse and the boat leaped, tossed, rocked and bucked but Loper held on and let er lope. Kolb called to Loper after he had crossed the last rapids before the terrible Double Pitch which he had planned to attempt the next day, recognizing it as the demon of all demons between the start and the whirlpool. He had not told Loper of this especially as he had not thot of making a try at it the first day. He saw the danger and shouted to Loper to come out of the river. Loper could not see the terrible double pitch, a sheer drop of 10 feet with a succession of falls following which made a fearful cataract. Kolb could see it and yelled hoarsely to Loper, who mistook the frantic signals as a "go ahead" and go ahead he did, his steady eye and strong arms tuned for the next rapids. Little did he know its power.



### Kolb Believes Loper Lost.

Powerless to yell louder or to make himself understood in the din filled gorge of mighty waters, Kolb saw the boat take a nip at the awful plunge which had cracked many a man's skull on the rocks below. The canoe leaped into the air and crashed down, down, down, out of sight in the gnashing, grinding, murderous water which boiled and tangled in the veritable maelstrom of fury, a fury so deadly that the foam stood out in clouds on the water surface.

Kolb, heart sick, watched for the reappearance of the small craft and his friend. He could see nothing of it. For an hour he clambered back and forth almost beside himself with apprehension. He thot how he had failed to warn Loper of the awful place, how he had not wanted him to try it. He imagined the worst had happened to his comrade. He had never had a fatality on any of his expeditions and he grew faint as he thot of the possibility that at last one had happened.

### Finds the Truth.

Finally he gave up looking as the sun sank behind the cliffs to the west and climbed up to the trail to go to camp, which he knew was a few miles further on. He had made arrangement to have the other three men meet himself and Loper, on this trail and return to camp together. He met Dean and asked quickly if anything had been seen of the wreckage of a boat or of Loper. "Why he's in camp," was Mr. Dean's rejoinder. Kolb almost discredited his own ears and soon reached camp and grasped Loper's hand with a mighty handshake and the first thing Loper said was that he had had a frightful time and had had enough of rapids for a while. Then he asked if the pictures would be good. "Pictures," said Kolb, "why man you got way beyond camera range and would not come back, you were so wild to run more rapids." Loper was crestfallen to think he had mastered a king of rapids and no movie had been possible. How he went over the drop and kept the boat upright, water-filled as it was, and finally was able to get away from the maw of the river monster, only he knows.

### Kolb Runs Death Traps.

The next morning a new start was made with Kolb in the boat and Loper helping Dean and the other two men who were to throw life lines if needed. Loper was to run part of the rapids later on and did so. Kolb got away under ideal picture conditions and started for the Little Niagara Whirlpool section, the most demonical on the entire

river. He had not been gone long when his boat got into a place where the waves were running many feet high, tangoing back and forth between granite cliffs and making slaps at his boat that sent it hither and thither like a chip. Kolb clung on with his masterly skill and rode the bronco.

Suddenly he struck a place that would have made a whirling dervish sea-sick and the boat shot over and he "got out and got under" good and plenty. He reached the life line and keel of the good ship and finally by might and main turned the craft right side up and crawled aloft. The watchful picture men, perched like magpies on the skyline above, did not see the upset. He had inhaled water and choked and gasped for some minutes.

Then came the whirlpool. The picture men who had gone down stream a ways saw his hat floating down the river and all of them had a terrible scare, fearing he was lost. Then came the worst place of all. Straight down the stream Kolb could see the water spouting many feet in the air as it shot with tremendous force against a boulder the size of a house in the whirlpool rapid. To the left was a "nigger head" rock which was covered with water about half the time. He saw that by making a corkscrew curve with a back action kick and a swipe at the scenery he might get thru, if he could dodge all the 100-ton pebbles and avoid the geysers of idiotic water that spit at the sky and found a target far below in the chugging foam under the rocks. He made it not. A wave slapped him a half-ton lick on the face and picked him up, gunboat and all and rammed him over five feet, right up on top of the nigger head. The boat skidded off upside down, full of water, in the insane foam.

Here Kolb made the movie man above close his eyes and crank, crank, crank with only a prayer and a peep to see if aim was still on the struggle below. Dean's eyes opened wide when he saw, not a dead man floating down stream with a smashed canoe trailing behind, but a very sore mariner whipping his boat back into line, safe beyond the rapid, grinning up the cliff with an "I told you so" expression in his eyes, if anyone could have seen it.

### The Rest of the Trip.

But why repeat the heart rending, scare giving scenes? They came again and again, not so bad, but chilling to the marrow and Loper took all the rapids he could, that is whenever he could coax Kolb to let him have a whack at the river. Those two greedy river men, hungry for more wild scraps finally arrived at the finish looking like they had been playing with the tail of an angry comet, but with the seven-inch

grin on each of their faces. They had conquered the river that had conquered men since men knew how to build the frail chips that float. They won and won a hard fight and the story will go down in history as one of the truly great river triumphs.

Kolb says that the cataracts excel anything in the Colorado river in fierceness altho of course vastly less extensive in length and number. Kolb was in Grand Junction all day yesterday and Loper arrived with the boat yesterday at noon when Mr. Dean got in. Black Canon next week they say.

## Appendix B

### Colorado River Sites within the Westwater Region

The following Colorado River sites are based upon the author's interpretation of historical data. The mile posts are approximated using *Belknap's Revised Waterproof Canyonlands River Guide*.

- 132.3:** Colorado-Utah border. State Line (Utaline) was a former Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad stop.
- 131.5:** The Charles Brock dugout was located on the right bank near the river.
- 130.8:** May Flats, named for the May family, owners of the Echo Ranch that existed in the area from the early 1900s through the 1920s.
- 128.8:** In the area of Bitter Creek there once existed a sanitarium and a hotel. Private property.
- 128.6:** Northeast of Bitter Creek area near the Colorado River, former resident, Owen Malin, had a graveyard for unidentified bodies that floated down river to Westwater. Private property.
- 127.9:** The house west of Bitter Creek was built in 1917 by Harvey Edward Herbert. Private property.
- 127.7:** Southwest of the river about one mile was the former site of Westwater town.
- 127.6:** Across the river is Moonshine Island, most likely named because of a still that was located near Westwater on a Colorado River island in 1930 during Prohibition.

- 127.5:** BLM Ranger Station. Area used to be a pasture belonging to long time resident Elwood C. Malin. His home, which was also used as a boarding house, was across the road from the railroad station and burned down about 1935. He then built a ranch that is on the hill above Westwater Wash. It is currently abandoned.
- Westwater Ranch:** The ranch was in existence in 1889 when Frank Clarence Kendrick surveyed the area. It originally belonged to the Bar X Cattle Company. Private Property
- 125 to 121:** Southeast of the Colorado River is Snyder Mesa, most likely named after Daniel M. Snyder who was a former Westwater resident who owned a ranch on the Little Dolores River.
- 124.7:** Some Fremont pictographs are about seventy-five yards from the confluence of Westwater Creek with the Colorado River. Private property.
- 124.2:** Wild Horse Cabin, or Miner's Cabin.,
- 123.6:** There is a rock chimney on the slope overlooking the campsite downstream of Miners Cabin that most likely is the remains of a placer miner's dugout.
- 123.2:** Duplex Miners Cabins. The cabins can be easily seen from the river during high water.
- 123:** The approximate location of the original dam site that was proposed in the canyon in 1903-1904. The coordinates were "2 miles below Westwater in the NE. 3 sec.27, T. 20 S., R. 25 E., where the width between walls at the low-water line is 100 feet."
- 120.8:** Little Hole.
- 120.4:** Little Dolores River area. Petroglyph eagle and mounted Indian are located at the base of the Wingate butte. Five miles upstream are Luster Ranch and Cave.
- 119.3:** Outlaw Cave or "Counterfeit Cave" is easily seen on the east bank.
- 119.4:** Outlaw grave.
- 118.2:** Big Hummer Rapid.
- 118:** Funnel Falls was previously called Double Pitch Rapid.
- 117.3:** Skull Rapid. In 1916 this rapid was called Whirlpool Rapid and Big Whirlpool. It was also known as Cisco Bend Rapid and one report claims it was called Dead Horse Rapid.

- 117:** The approximate final 1903-1904 proposed location of a dam site, described as being “about 6 miles below the former site (mile 123), in the SW. 3 sec. 4, T. 21 S., R. 25 E., at a point where the river makes two sudden right-angle bends, forming a letter ‘Z.’” These coordinates are further inland, away from the river, making the exact location unknown.
- 116.3:** Trail Canyon, one of few escape routes out of the canyon.
- 116:** Big Hole.
- 112.3:** Cottonwood Wash, a former railroad stop. Petroglyphs are located here.
- 111.2:** Agate Wash, a former railroad stop.
- 111.1:** A memorial to Charlie Ray “CR” Sherrill.
- 111:** Rose Ranch, formerly the Hallett Ranch.
- 110.5:** Knowles Ranch.
- 110.5:** Cisco Landing. Like Westwater, Cisco was a railroad water stop.

# Notes

## Preface

1. Michael D. Milligan, "Westwater," *Canyon Legacy* 12 (winter 1991): 25–27. "Westwater's Violent Beginnings & Colorado River Sites," *Canyon Legacy* 42 (summer 2001): 20–28.
2. Ruth M. (Bryson) Grennie, letter to author, 30 January 1989.

## 1

### First Touched by Man: Beginnings

1. Doug Wheat, *The Floater's Guide to Colorado* (Billings, Montana: Falcon Press Publishing, 1983).
2. Peter Ratcliffe to John L. J. Hart, 6 November 1966. John L. J. Hart, Westwater papers, in author's possession. Peter Ratcliffe reported finding a small spring with a "garden hose sized flow" in Little Hole. Other known springs have been reported in the region near Marble Canyon and Bitter Creek.
3. Barnes wrote: "[A] considerable percentage of the rock art within the general Anasazi and Fremont cultural regions cannot be assigned with certainty to those cultures. It is even difficult at times to distinguish historic from prehistoric rock art, unless obviously historic subject matter is depicted, such as horses or firearms." F.A. Barnes, *Canyon Country Prehistoric Rock Art*, (Salt Lake City: Wasatch Publishers, Inc., 1982), 58.
4. Some Barrier Canyon pictographs in Middle Canyon are the same style, though not as extensive, as those found at Sego Canyon near Thompson, Utah. Middle Canyon has periodically been referred to as Westwater Canyon. A third Westwater Canyon, in San Juan County, has likely been the source of rumors of an archaeological dig across the river from the Westwater ranger station. The archaeological dig of the Anasazi Westwater Ruin occurred during the late 1970s at that canyon near Blanding, Utah.
5. Tammy Stone, *The Prehistory of Colorado and Adjacent Areas*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999): 31–34. Two separate Paleo-Indian periods, the Clovis and Folsom, were discovered in New Mexico.



- The primary distinction between these periods is the points that Paleo-Indians used for hunting animals. The larger Clovis fluted points were most likely attached to spears and used for hunting large megafauna, including the mammoth, and later the Folsom points were used on ancient bison and smaller animals, after the mammoth and the larger megafauna became extinct.
6. D. May, "Mammoths on the Colorado Plateau," *Canyon Legacy* 4 (winter 1989): 27–28. The closest proximity to Westwater where mammoth remains have been found is forty miles downstream at Professor Valley near Moab. Mammoths were grassland animals and likely would not have been in Westwater Canyon, except possibly at the boaters launch site, where they would have access to the Colorado River.
  7. Terry Tempest Williams, foreword to *Exploring the Fremont*, by David B. Madsen (Salt Lake City: Utah Museum of Natural History, 1989), ix.
  8. Madsen, *Exploring the Fremont*, 42. Examples found on a Colorado River tributary are the artifacts from the Bull Creek sites between Hanksville and the foot of the Henry Mountains.
  9. Ibid., 22. Such distinctive groups of Fremont Indians are not accepted by all archeologists and are only presented here to focus on a possible type that may have hunted through the Westwater region.
  10. Stone, *Prehistory of Colorado*, 126.
  11. Jan Pettit, *Utes: The Mountain People* (Boulder: Johnson Printing, 1990), 5. In addition, Dr. Omer C. Stewart wrote: "One problem may be phrased as the conflict between evidence for permanent settlement versus that for migration. Modern linguists like to trace migrations, and sometimes appear to me to invent them out of thin air. Archeologists also favor migration as an explanation whenever markedly different traits of culture appear in an area or disappear from it. On the other hand ethnologists find strong support for the theory that populations prefer to remain living within a narrow region of familiarity and usually move from their homeland only under very great pressure or temptation. The ecologists support the stationary bias with the evidence that great stability and long occupation of any area is necessary for the aborigines to acquire the great personal knowledge of all the natural resources available within each particular zone. Folklore, musicology, and physical anthropology support the theory of little geographic movement for the Ute." He added that their folklore in particular "strongly implies that the Ute have always lived where they now live." Omer C. Stewart, "Ute Indians: Before and after White Contact," *Utah State Historical Quarterly* 34 (winter 1966): 38–61.
  12. Pettit, *Utes*, 14.
  13. Ted J. Warner, ed., and Fray Ángelico Chavez, trans., *The Dominguez-Escalante Journal: Their Expedition Through Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico in 1776* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995), 36.
  14. Richard A. Firmage, *A History of Grand County Utah Centennial County History Series* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society and Grand County, 1996), 52.

15. Faun McConkey Tanner, *The Far Country: A Regional History of Moab and La Sal, Utah* (Salt Lake City: Olympus Publishing Company, 1976), 45–61.
16. See, for example, the Hayden Survey's reports on "troublesome Indians" in the La Sal and Blue Mountains. F. V. Hayden, *Ninth Annual Report of the United States, Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, Embracing Colorado and Parts of Adjacent Territories: 1875* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1877).
17. The event was instigated in the spring of 1881 when cowboys Dick May and John Thurman were killed by Indians near the Big Bend of the Dolores River. A posse of volunteers trailed approximately one hundred Ute Indians to the La Sal Mountains where the major fight occurred. After the confrontation most of the Ute Indians made their way to a reservation at Dolores, Colorado. There, two Utes were implicated in the killings and were incarcerated. None of the other Indians were identified. Some sources suspect they were renegade Utes who had killed Indian agent Nathan C. Meeker and twenty-nine others in Colorado and fled the reservation. Meeker incited the tragedy leading up to his own death by trying to force the Utes to become "civilized" by learning farming. Against their wishes he invited civilians onto the reservation to plow under the White River Utes' favorite horse pasture and race track. Meeker's death would eventually be used as a political excuse to remove nearly all of the Utes from Colorado and place them on what became the Uintah and Ouray Reservation in Utah. Rusty Salmon and Robert S. McPherson, "Cowboys, Indians, and Conflict: The Pinhook Draw Fight, 1881," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 69 (Winter 2001): 4–28. Tanner, *The Far Country*, 115–46.
18. Regarding the site, author and guide Dennis Slifer wrote: "There is always some uncertainty and conjecture, especially in that part of Utah where there seems to be some overlap of influences from Fremont, Barrier Canyon, Anasazi, and perhaps other groups." He agreed that Barrier Canyon and Ute styles are represented at the site but other styles are not as clear. The site includes several ghostly Barrier Canyon anthropomorphic figures with a couple of small petroglyphs over them: two anthropomorphic stick figures and bear tracks. Nearby is a rock covered with petroglyphs that show an individual possibly with an atlatl in his hand. One panel that is separated from the other rock art has three large chalky circular shapes; the middle circle has a dark skeletal figure in its center, while the other two circles possibly are shields. There are numerous pictographs of hand prints and horses. Approximately a half mile from this site is the historical Antoine Robidoux inscription. Of the site Slifer wrote, "It's a fascinating site, with rock art spanning from archaic times [Barrier Canyon] through Fremont & Anasazi up to historic times [Ute and Robidoux]." Dennis Slifer, letter to author, 29 January 2003. See also Dennis Slifer, *Guide to Rock Art of the Utah Region: Sites with Public Access*. (Santa Fe: Ancient City Press, 2000).
19. An example would be Ferdinand Vandeverve Hayden. Hayden surveyed much of the West including Colorado and parts of Nevada, Idaho,

Montana, Wyoming, and Utah. Utah was a territory in 1875 and 1876 when the Hayden Survey was in eastern Utah surveying the Grand County region including Westwater. During the 1860s and 1870s there were four major surveys in the West headed by Major John Wesley Powell, Clarence Rivers King, Lieutenant George Montague Wheeler, and Hayden. The surveys were not coordinated at that time to produce the same results, but most of them included gathering information about the region, including fossils, geology, flora, fauna and Indian artifacts. When the United States Geological Survey (USGS) was established on March 3, 1879, to combine efforts and coordinate future surveys, the contest for heading it was between F. V. Hayden and Clarence King. Hayden was the favorite, but some strategic politicking got the job for King, who would head the USGS until 1881 then resign. His successor was Major John Wesley Powell. Mike Foster, *Strange Genius: The Life of Ferdinand Vanderveer Hayden* (Niwot, Colorado: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1994). Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: The Exploration of the Grand Canyon and the Second Opening of the West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1954).

20. Cliff dwellers refers to the Indians whose ruins are found along cliffs such as the Anasazi at Mesa Verde.
21. "Westwater Items," *Moab Times-Independent*, 4 August 1927.
22. F. A. Barnes and Michaelene Pendleton, *Canyon Country Prehistoric Indians: Their Cultures, Ruins, Artifacts and Rock Art* (Salt Lake City: Wasatch Publishers, 1979), 24–28.
23. In 1940, when the caves were originally sampled as potential digs, Jim Luster owned considerable acreage across the river from the Westwater landing and extending south to the Little Dolores River.
24. H.M. Worthington, Robert Lister, Norton H. Nickerson, and Ding Hou, "Archeological Investigations on the Uncompahgre Plateau at Glade Park," *Canyon Legacy* 42 (summer 2001): 2–6.
25. A comparison of the maize in Luster Cave dated it prior to A.D. 1000 because it contained Eastern and Mexican influences similar to those found in other excavations in western Colorado and eastern Utah. *Ibid.*, 4.
26. John L. Malin, telephone conversation with author, 3 June 1991.
27. Ila (Malin) Reay, telephone conversation with author, 16 July 2003.
28. Nina Bowen, "Boats in the Desert, Part I," *Utah Rock Art: Papers of the Eighteenth Annual Symposium* (Salt Lake City: Utah Rock Art Research Association, 1998), 1–8. See also Jesse E. Warner, "Boats in the Desert, Part II," 9–28, in the same volume. There are, of course, other possible interpretations of these images.
29. The author described her interpretation further: "The artist has used rock incorporation to enhance the 'ran into the rock' part of the story. The portion of the rock face that bulges out to play the part of the boulder in the water has been enhanced with pigment." Bowen, "Boats in the Desert," 1.
30. Although the interpretation of rock art is highly controversial and speculative, some of LaVan Martineau's observations are intriguing. He does not recognize the animals at Little Hole as bighorn sheep, but instead, as a

- universal quadruped or goat symbol that may depict action or direction. At Little Hole the string of quadrupeds face upward in the direction of the only exit from the canyon. Another interpretation is that they represent migrations. LaVan Martineau, *The Rocks Begin To Speak* (Las Vegas: KC Publications, 1973), 47–67.
31. F.A. Barnes, *Canyonlands National Park: Early History and First Descriptions* (Moab: Canyon Country Publications, 1988), 11. See also G. Clell Jacobs, “The Phantom Pathfinder: Juan Maria Antonio de Rivera and His Expedition,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 60 (summer 1992). Although the diary was discovered in 1969, it remained unknown until it was rediscovered in 1975 or 1976 .
  32. Jacobs, “The Phantom Pathfinder,” 209.
  33. *Ibid.*, 202.
  34. *Ibid.*, 219.
  35. David H. Coyner, *The Lost Trappers* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).
  36. Charles Kelly, “Antoine Robidoux,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 6 (October 1933): 115–16.
  37. The document is believed to have been written by Otis “Dock” Marston because his handwritten notes are on it, and the structure of the document favors his style. Unidentified document in the author’s possession is likely a copy of an original from the Otis R. “Dock” Marston papers at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
  38. Thelma S. Guild and Harvey L. Carter, *Kit Carson: A Pattern for Heroes* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 60–61.
  39. LeRoy R. Hafen, “Colonel Loring’s Expedition Across Colorado in 1858,” *Colorado Magazine* 23 (March 1946), 49–76.
  40. Nee Ring Pennington, interview by Linelle Wagner, Westwater, Utah, May 1982. Virginia McConnell Simmons wrote that in “west-central Colorado the Colorado River was an obstacle to those who needed to cross it, but a few fords, known to Indians, could be found above Westwater Canyon, at Grand Junction, and near DeBeque.” *The Ute Indians of Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2000), 5–6.
  41. Ken Reyher, *Antoine Robidoux and Fort Uncompahgre* (Ouray, Colorado: Western Reflections, 1998), 7.
  42. *Ibid.*, 40.
  43. *Ibid.*, 53.
  44. John Hoffman, *Arches National Park: An Illustrated Guide and History* (San Diego, California: Western Recreational Publications 1982), 57.
  45. Kelly, “Antoine Robidoux,” 115–16. In a letter to the author dated 14 January 2001, noted Western inscription authority James Knipmeyer expressed his opinion that “the word in question is spelled ‘WIYTE.’ Yes, there is some flaking of the rock through the ‘Y,’ but it is NOT an ‘N.’ It looks nothing like any of the other ‘Ns’ in the inscription.” Still, the inscription leaves some unanswered questions.
  46. James Knipmeyer, “The Denis Julien Inscriptions,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 64 (winter 1996): 54.

47. Ibid., 68–69.
48. Lloyd M. Pierson, “Rollin J. Reeves and the Boundary Between Utah and Colorado,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 66 (spring 1998): 112.
49. Thomas G. Alexander and Leonard J. Arrington, “Camp in the Sagebrush: Camp Floyd, Utah, 1858–1861,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 34 (spring 1966): 3–21. The “Utah War” was an alleged insurrection of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) against the authority of the United States Government. Utah was a territory governed by the Mormon prophet Brigham Young when Johnston’s army approached it under orders of President James Buchanan in 1857. Brigham Young outfitted 1,100 volunteers to defend against Johnson’s army. Far less than a full-blown war, the Mormons harassed the army by cutting them off from their supplies and delaying their approach to Salt Lake City, sufficiently that the army did not enter the valley until the following year.
50. Hafen, “Colonel Loring’s Expedition,” 49–76. Colonel A. S. Johnson’s difficulty entering the territory in 1857 most likely prompted the federal government to explore and improve access to the Mormon stronghold.
51. In a letter to the author dated 7 December 2000, Lloyd M. Pierson wrote that the “maps made by the Hayden Expedition in 1874 and 1875 show the wagon road touching the Colorado River at McGraw Bottom just above Dewey, again at the Cisco Pump House and at Westwater or the mouth of Bitter Creek.”
52. Firmage, *Grand County*, 69–70.
53. A brief history provided by the 1875 Hayden Survey reads: “The region, we might say, was entirely unexplored. Gunnison, in 1853, passed just north of it, and although he puts a portion on his map, it was outside of his line of march, and it is therefore necessarily incorrect. Along his line of travel his map is very correct. Captain Macomb in 1859 traveled across the extreme southwestern corner of the district just beyond the point we reached in our work.” Hayden, *Ninth Annual Report*, 36.
54. Ibid. 335. The 1876 Hayden party included Henry Gannett, topographer; Dr. A. C. Peale, geologist; J. E. Mushbach, topographical assistant; two packers; and a cook.
55. The Hayden Survey of 1875 included Granite and Little Dolores Creeks in its observations. Seemingly impressed with the discovery of “Archean (Precambrian) Rock” it provided quite a few observations of the entire region and recognized the metamorphic rock was not localized. Following the detailed observation of the Little Dolores Creek that empties into the Colorado River, the survey said of that river: “Grand (Colorado) River appears to be entirely in the red beds.” Ibid., 66. This would suggest the canyon was observed from a distance and only the Wingate Sandstone could be seen.
56. Gannett described where the survey party separated from the river when its “course changes abruptly soon after entering this cañon (Ruby) [immediately upstream of Westwater] to southwest and then to south-southwest, which it holds as far as the mouth of the Dolores.” He said, “There are but three or four places between the head of this cañon and

the mouth of the Dolores where the river can be reached.” Ibid., 336, 345, 347–49. According to Lloyd M. Pierson, the Salt Lake wagon trail is the same one referred to earlier having been built by Colonel Loring. Pierson to author, 7 December 2000.

## 2

## Westwater Town: A Trip in Time

1. Memorandum from archaeologist Richard E. Fike to Monticello, Utah district manager dated 27 June 1973. The memorandum includes site inventories and brief histories of the Wild Horse Cabin and Outlaw Cave in Westwater Canyon. The information is not for public use and resides with the Moab Bureau of Land Management (BLM).
2. Owen Madox Malin, interview by Marianna Allred (Hopkins), Dave Minor of the BLM, and Blake Hopkins, tape recording, 23 April 1978, Bureau of Land Management, Moab.
3. Memorandum from Richard E. Fike. Malin’s story is somewhat confirmed by Richard Fike’s description of finding “tin can fragments.”
4. “Westwater Items,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 27 July 1922.
5. “New Gold Field,” *Grand Junction News*, 3 February 1894.
6. The San Juan gold rush of the early 1890s was caused when a trader Jonathan P. Williams showed some coal samples he obtained near the confluence of the San Juan and Colorado Rivers to some entrepreneurs and railroad men. Later miscommunication characterized the coal as gold. Estimates of miners traveling through San Juan County between 1892 and 1893 searching for the placer gold range from seven hundred to five thousand. Robert S. McPherson, *A History of San Juan County: In the Palm of Time*, Utah Centennial County History Series (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society and San Juan County Commission, 1995): 241–67.
7. “New Gold Field,” *Grand Junction News*, 3 February 1894.
8. The steel spring bed was called a rocker. I have not been able to confirm how it worked.
9. During a Westwater cleanup on September 22, 2001, an engine was retrieved from the Colorado River near Wild Horse camp, was delivered to BLM ranger Alvin Halliday. Although the make has not been identified, estimates of the age of the engine date somewhere in the mid-1920s. See “Westwater Canyon, ‘Taking Care of Business,’ Pictures of Westwater Cleanup Sept. 22, 2001.” <http://home.mesastate.edu/~jerry/guide/westwater.htm>
10. “Westwater News,” *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 2 December 1920.
11. “Westwater Boomings,” *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 27 November 1897.
12. Ibid.
13. *Moab Grand Valley Times*, “Westwater Items,” 15 April 1898.
14. *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 17 March 1899.
15. Thirty years later the federal government and Utah would face each other again, only this time it would be over jurisdiction of river beds. The ownership of river beds would be determined in the courts based upon the

- navigability of the Colorado, Green, and San Juan Rivers. The river bed case determined that where the rivers were navigable, the river beds belonged to the state of Utah. Those riverbeds such as Westwater and Cataract Canyon were determined to not be navigable and controlled by the federal government.
16. "Editorial Notes," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 29 November 1901.
  17. "Westwater Items," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 1 May 1903.
  18. "Westwater News," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 23 November 1917. Although there were reports of copper mining at Little Hole, two separate exploratory river trips into Westwater Canyon in 1998 and 2000 included geologists who did not discover any evidence of copper at Little Hole.
  19. Beatrix Simpson, "Westwater on the Grand," *The Railroad Red Book* (Denver: Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, 1916 & 1917), 254–55. *The Railroad Red Book* was a monthly publication of the D&RGW RR that included train schedules. The entire article and a photograph appeared on the front page of Moab's *Grand Valley Times* on February 9, 1917, under the heading "Westwater's Resources Set Forth in Graphic Terms by Beatrix Simpson."
  20. Jesse Gruver, telephone conversation with author, 15 March 1987. The *Moab Grand Valley Times* of January 12, 1900, reported: "A bad wreck occurred to a passenger train on the R.G.W. RR near Westwater, in which fireman Ryan was killed. It was caused by a land slide striking the train, turning the engine over in to Grand river and nearly burying the cars." A similar incident was reported in the same paper on December 5, 1902, when a "bad wreck" occurred two miles east of Westwater. The west-bound passenger train ran into a pile of rock slide debris that threw all of the cars off the track except the real Pullman. The engine was totally demolished. Fireman E.G. Biddle was killed, and two other railroad employees were injured. Flash flooding and rock slides throughout Ruby Canyon prompted the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad to relocate the tracks through that canyon in 1927. The *Times-Independent* on March 24, 1927, reported that "the new track will be sufficiently removed from the bluffs that danger from rolling rocks will be negligible." The Utah Construction Company was hired to move eleven miles of the track away from the bluffs.
  21. John L. Malin, letter to author, 29 March 1987.
  22. Helen J. Stiles, "Down The Colorado In 1889," *Colorado Magazine* 41 (summer 1964), 225–46.
  23. Charles Kendrick in 1889 is the only known source to refer to Westwater Ranch as the Box X Ranch. Newspaper sources from 1892 through 1894 referred to it as the Bar X Ranch. There is a canyon in the Book Cliffs by this name, and Harry McDonald referred to the Bar X Bottom in the vicinity of McDonald Creek in Ruby Canyon.
  24. Jackson Thode, letter to author, 2 October 1987. See also Lloyd M. Pierson and Lyle E. Jamison, "The Denver and Rio Grande Narrow Gauge Railroad Across Grand County 1883–1890," *Canyon Legacy* 42 (summer 2001): 14–18.



25. R. C. Farewell, *Rio Grande Secret Places Volume Two: Ruby Canyon and the Desert* (Boulder, Colorado: Johnson Printing, 1999).
26. Marianna Allred Hopkins recalled that when she interviewed Owen Malin in 1978, he said at “one time they were looking to make Westwater the county seat.” Marianna Allred Hopkins and Blake Hopkins, interview by author, undated (mid-1980s), Salt Lake City, Utah.
27. “Report about Grand County and its Resources,” *Salt Lake City Daily Tribune*, 27 December 1909.
28. Some early residents of Westwater who arrived during the 1890s were Charles C. Brock, Captain Wilson E. Davis, J. R. Williams, Walter V. Champlain, Edward Price, Charles H. Hallett, Leroy Harris, Simon Mercer, George D. Grant, John and Thomas Brandon, Daniel H. Snyder, Harvey Edward Herbert, Commadore Perry Bryson, John May, Robert and Florence Fuller, Joe Harris, Frank D. Darrow, and George H. Darrow.
29. “Mrs. Florence Fuller, Cattlewoman, Is Dead,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 6 February 1930.
30. Thode, letter to author, 2 October 1987.
31. “Another Shooting at Westwater,” *Provo Daily Enquirer*, 12 March 1894.
32. The importance of irrigation planning for the arid lands of the West was mostly ignored until it was recognized nationally in 1888 after several years of drought. Major John Wesley Powell was responsible for the United States Geological Survey (USGS) becoming involved with surveying arid lands for irrigation planning. As early as 1878 he suggested cooperative irrigation measures that included building dams to protect valuable water resources. Much of his insight developed from his time spent in Utah observing the irrigation methods used by the Mormons during his surveys there between 1869 and 1872. Congress did not side with him until major droughts during the late 1880s produced evidence of the need for irrigation planning to sustain populations in the arid west. By 1890 politics interfered with Powell’s irrigation surveys because they prevented homesteading until the areas near water resources were surveyed. Lacking foresight and feeling public pressure Congress repealed this protection of the lands in favor of opening them up to premature development. Defeated, Powell resigned from the USGS in 1894, but his insight regarding planning for arid lands would resurface in 1934 during a drought that affected most of the United States agriculture and livestock industries. Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: The Exploration of the Grand Canyon and the Second Opening of the West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1954).
33. “Westwater Items,” *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 15 April 1898.
34. “Are You Looking for a Home,” *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 16 December 1898.
35. “Editorial Notes,” *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 15 September 1905.
36. “Will Raise Alfalfa at Westwater on Big Scale,” *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 17 February 1911.
37. T.C. Henry had a history of speculative land development and irrigation enterprises that he enticed investors to partially fund, and he raised additional capital by issuing bonds. In Colorado a case was brought against

- Henry by the Travelers Insurance Company of Hartford Connecticut accusing him of mismanaging money he was charged with. The company had invested with him from 1880 to 1884 when it became aware of “irregularities” in his business. They claimed that he had previously had done much the same thing in Kansas. Early in the process the courts were siding with Henry, but the insurance company was vehement about pursuing its contention as far as possible. “That Colorado Case: The Travelers and Its Discredited Correspondent,” *Grand Junction News*, 5 April 1890: 9.
38. “Westwater Property Sold to Satisfy Judgement,” *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 6 October 1911.
  39. Westwater celebrated a new beginning to its economy with a party at Martin’s home. “Westwater Celebrates Wiping Out of Debt,” *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 28 September 1917.
  40. Swansea was a copper rich mining district about thirty miles from Parker, Arizona. The copper was first discovered around 1862 but did not get mined heavily until after 1904 when the Arizona & California Railroad began constructing a line from Wickenburg to Parker. Swansea’s name came from the birthplace of George Mitchell, one of the principal promoters of the Clara Consolidated Gold and Copper Mining Company that began mining camps there in 1907. Swansea reached its productive peak in 1910 and by 1937 it was a ghost town. BLM Arizona Lake Havasu Field Office—Swansea Historic Townsite, <http://www.az.blm.gov/info.swansea.html>. Doug Duncan. Swansea, Arizona, *Utah Adventure Magazine and Guide*, <http://www.utahadventure.com>.
  41. Simpson, “Westwater,” 254–55. Beatrix Simpson was an early correspondent for the *Grand Valley Times* and claimed to have run the Westwater post office and store from about 1914 until 1922. Her husband, Owen L. Simpson, had partial ownership of the Westwater and Cisco Mercantile Companies that had holdings in both towns and on the Little Dolores.
  42. Charles L. Schmalz, “Sugar Beets in Cache Valley: An Amalgamation of Agriculture and Industry,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 57 (fall 1989): 370–88.
  43. Ibid.
  44. “Big Ranch Sells for Over \$60,000: Largest Real Estate Transaction in History of County—Provo Men are the Purchasers,” *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 14 February 1919.
  45. “Westwater Items,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 2 December 1920.
  46. Owen Malin’s son Dean said “the original railbed went quite close to Westwater and a gravesite where about 35 Chinese workers were buried.” Dean Malin, letter to author, 10 June 1987. John Malin did not recall the Chinese graveyard but speculated it was not true in a letter to the author, 9 August 1987.
  47. Dean Malin, letter to author, 10 June 1987.
  48. “Westwater Items,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 29 September 1927.
  49. “Westwater Items,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 20 July 1922.
  50. John L. Malin, letter to author, 29 March 1987.
  51. Greta Galyean, telephone conversation with author, 30 September 1991.

52. Greta Galyean, letter to author, 26 November 1991.
53. "Notice to Sheepmen," *Moab Times-Independent*, 24 March 1932.
54. "John C. Hardison Dies At Home In Westwater," *Moab Times-Independent*, 8 July 1943.
55. "Westwater Items," *Moab Times-Independent*, 29 June 1922.
56. "Westwater Items," *Moab Times-Independent*, 4 August 1927.
57. "Westwater News," *Moab Times-Independent*, 21 October 1920.
58. "Westwater News," *Moab Times-Independent*, 23 November 1922.
59. "Newsy Notes From Town of Cisco," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 28 February 1913.
60. "Westwater Items," *Moab Times-Independent*, 28 September 1922.
61. "Railroad Man Retires," *Moab Times-Independent*, 1 January 1925.
62. "New Westwater Route Will Shorten Midland Trail," *Moab Times-Independent*, 31 March 1921.
63. "Favor Road By Way of Westwater Town," *Moab Times-Independent*, 24 March 1923.
64. "Westwater Events," *Moab Times-Independent*, 28 March 1929.
65. "Westwater Events," *Moab Times-Independent*, 30 May 1929.
66. "Road Westwater to State Line is Closed," *Moab Times-Independent*, 17 July 1930.
67. Brian Q. Cannon, "Struggle against Great Odds: Challenges in Utah's Marginal Agricultural Areas, 1925–1939," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 54 (fall 1986): 308–27.
68. Ibid.
69. U.S. Department of the Interior, Geological Survey, Utah District, *Colorado River near Cisco Utah. Discharge, in cubic feet per second, water years 1931 and 1934.*
70. Leonard J. Arrington, "Utah's Great Drought of 1934," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 54 (summer 1986): 245–65.
71. Thode, letter to author, 2 October 1987.
72. "Post Office to Close at Westwater," *Moab Times-Independent*, 28 January 1954.

## 3

## Gunslingers and Bad Guys

1. *Grand Junction News*, 24 August 1889.
2. *Salt Lake Herald*, 13 September 1892.
3. *Provo Daily Enquirer*, 22 December 1892.
4. Stiles, "Down the Colorado," 235.
5. Jean Westwood, "Richard Dallin Westwood: Sheriff and Ferryman of Early Grand County," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 55 (winter 1987): 66–86.
6. Several spellings of Mueller's name occurred during the trials, including Miller and Muler.
7. Several spellings of Dussel's name occurred during the trials, including Ducel, Dusell, Dousell, and Dusel.

8. "The Davis Trial at Provo," *Salt Lake City Daily Tribune*, 20 December 1892.
9. "The Westwater Tragedy: Captain Davis on Trial for Killing Three Men," *Salt Lake Herald*, 20 December 1892.
10. "Horrible Slaughter: One Man Meets Three and Kills Them All," *Grand Junction News*, 27 August 1892.
11. "Sheriff of Grand Cited to Appear for Contempt," *Provo Daily Enquirer*, 21 January 1895.
12. Ibid.
13. "Novel Defense to Be Made for Davis," *Salt Lake City Daily Tribune*, 3 February 1914.
14. "Forged Paper Stained Red?" *Los Angeles Daily Times*, 3 February 1914.
15. "Heart Is Poisoned and Skull Broken," *Los Angeles Daily Times*, 22 January 1914.
16. "Forged Paper Stained Red?" *Los Angeles Daily Times*, 3 February 1914.
17. "Spill Contents before Jurors," *Los Angeles Daily Times*, 14 May 1914.
18. "Davis Confesses He's Killed Three Men," *Los Angeles Daily Times*, 24 January 1914.
19. "Is Nearly Ended: Defendants Are on the Stand," *Provo Daily Enquirer*, 5 April 1894. "Westwater Tragedy: Frank Grant's Vivid Recital of His Brother's Death," *Salt Lake Herald*, 5 April 1894.
20. Prior to August 17, 1892, a C. H. Hallett reportedly arrived at Grand Junction with an unusual piece of gold that he found among Indian ruins in the Henry Mountains. The dates between his testimony at the Captain Davis trial and the report from Grand Junction either indicate a contradiction or would indicate he was jockeying between Westwater and Grand Junction, possibly checking out land ownership in the Westwater vicinity. "The Henry Mountains: A Rich Mineral Country. Gold, Silver, Copper Etc.," *Grand Junction News*, 17 August 1892.
21. "Shot Him From Ambush: Cowardly Assassination of Royal Grant at West Water," *Salt Lake Herald*, 27 February 1894.
22. Newspapers alternately refer to him as James W., John W., and Jack during the trial. Court records listed him as James H. Smith.
23. "From the Garden City," *Salt Lake Herald*, 28 February 1894.
24. "Another Shooting at Westwater," *Provo Daily Enquirer*, 12 March 1894.
25. "Latest Rumor of Homicide: It Was Said to Be at Westwater, but Is a Fake," *Salt Lake City Daily Tribune*, 13 March 1894, "Nobody Hurt," *Grand Junction News*, 17 March 1894.
26. "A Murder Trial: Will Be Commenced at Provo Today," *Salt Lake Herald*, 3 April 1894.
27. "To Save His Own Life, Davis Tells Why He Killed Three Men," *Salt Lake City Daily Tribune*, 26 September 1894.
28. "A Mixed Verdict at Provo," *Salt Lake City Daily Tribune*, 7 April 1894.
29. John L. Malin, letters to author, 29 March 1987 and 3 December 1987, and telephone conversation with author, 3 June 1991.
30. Lena M. Urquhart, *Roll Call: The Violent and Lawless* (Denver: Golden Bell Press): 52–55.

31. "Possemen Still on the Alert," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 28 May 1928.
32. "Lamar Robbery Killer Made Headquarters Here Very Recently," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 19 August 1929.
33. In a 2000 summer/fall exhibit at the Finney County Historical Museum in Garden City, Kansas, there was among numerous items and artifacts related to the Fleagle Gang, a display of Dr. Weininger's car window with Jake Fleagle's finger print still visible on it. According to a 1997 article titled "Positive I.D." in the museum's publication *Sequoyan*, the window was part of the Chicago World's Fair in 1930 and was used in training classes at the FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C. See also Hal O. Kesler, *Lamar, Colorado—Its First Hundred Years 1886–1986* (Shawnee Mission, Kansas: Kes-Print, 1986), 117–21.
34. "Trap Brings Capture of Bank Bandit," *Salt Lake Tribune* 15 October 1930.
35. "Mexican Kills Fellow Countryman With Axe," *Moab Times-Independent*, 4 December 1919.
36. John L. Malin, telephone conversation, 3 June 1991.
37. "Finds Killing Was Justified," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 29 November 1912.
38. "Westwater Events," *Moab Times-Independent*, 7 March, 21 March 1929.

#### 4

#### Cattle versus Sheep

1. Stiles, "Down the Colorado," 235. As indicated previously most references during the late 1890s referred to this ranch as the Bar X Ranch.
2. "Charles R. Sieber Killed!" *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 29 August 1902.
3. Ibid.
4. "Joe Harris Acquitted," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 14 October 1904.
5. John L. Malin, letter to author, 29 March 1987.
6. Dave Fishell, letter to author, 7 September 1987.
7. "Joseph Pace on Trial," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 12 November 1909.
8. *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 25 May 1906.
9. "Joe Harris Shot Dead," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 8 October 1909.
10. Fishell, letter, 7 September 1987.
11. "Jury Acquits Joseph Pace," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 19 November 1909.
12. John L. Malin letter, 29 March 1987.
13. "S. A. Taylor Loses Sheep," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 28 May 1909.
14. "Not Killed by Cattlemen," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 13 March 1908.
15. "Westwater Notes," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 28 March 1919.
16. "Trouble Starts at Westwater," *Moab Times-Independent*, 9 December 1920. "Six Sheepmen to Face Trial," *Moab Times-Independent*, 16 December 1920.
17. Walker D. Wyman and John D. Hart, "The Legend of Charlie Glass, Negro Cowboy on the Colorado-Utah Range," Utah State Historical Society. A

- less complete version of this essay was published in *Colorado Magazine* 46 (winter 1969): 40–54.
18. “Range War Ends in Death at Cisco Today,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 24 February 1921.
  19. “Charles Glass Is Cleared of Murder Charge,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 1 December 1921.
  20. “Fence Law Wins in Cisco Precinct,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 6 November 1930.
  21. Colorado Congressman Ed Taylor wrote the Taylor Grazing Act. The act was intended to allow governmental management of the previously unregulated public lands by establishing grazing districts with limited stock allowances. Grazing fees would be collected for the livestock and used toward range improvements. “In this manner the over-grazing and erosion resulting from the abuse of the range will be prevented.” “Taylor Grazing Bill Passed by Congress,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 21 June 1934. Cattlemen felt that the act favored sheepmen, and in 1950 the Grand County stockmen created an organization to investigate range conflicts and finance a campaign to protect their grazing rights. “It was the contention of the group that the BLM, during its administration of the Taylor Act during the past 14 years, has failed to give proper consideration to the rights of resident ranchers and stockmen and now proposes to perpetuate policies which will be ruinous to the rights of resident stockmen as well as to the economic well being of the local tax structure” “Stockmen Organize to Wage Fight for Range Rights,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 23 November 1950.
  22. Wyman and Hart, “The Legend of Charlie Glass.” “Charles Glass, Well Known Cowboy Dies in Car Wreck,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 25 February 1937.

## 5

## Rocks, Dams, and Hideouts: Entering the Canyon

1. Wil Bussard, “Westwater Canyon: A Geologist’s River Guide, With a Focus on Precambrian Rocks,” *The Confluence* (winter 1999): 21–28. I have not located any material specifically written on the geology of Westwater Canyon other than Wil Bussard’s articles in *The Confluence*.
2. Wil Bussard to author, 25 January 2001. Additionally, Bussard wrote: “Precambrian rocks in nearby areas depict some of the surface activity in the region during this time. The Grand Canyon supergroup dates from 1.25 to 0.8 billion years (more recent than the Precambrian rocks in Westwater and within the missing unconformity at Westwater) and contains marine and continental sedimentary rocks as well as volcanic lava flow deposits. These rest unconformably on Vishnu Schist and Zoroaster granite, rocks which are very similar to the Precambrian of Westwater. In the San Juan Mountains of southwest Colorado, the older Precambrian (1.7 billion years) consist of granites, schist, and gneisses which were

derived from volcanic and sedimentary rocks. These rocks are in part similar to those of Westwater Canyon. The Uncompahgre formation (1.4 billion years old), also in the San Juan Mountains, is a series of quartzites and phyllites which were originally beach sands and oceanic black shales.”

3. Ibid. In his letter Wil Bussard provided a summary of the Precambrian rocks in Westwater: “(1) Sedimentary rocks were laid down and cut by shallow basalt dike intrusions prior to 1.7 b. y. [billion years]. (2) Mountain building and burial of 1. continued to depth of 10–20 kilometers, where metamorphism and recrystallization occurred (metamorphism resets the radiometric clock to the date of the metamorphism). (3) Granite intruded this deep crust as mountain building and continental accretion continued. (4) Uplift and erosion continued and created the Great Unconformity across most of the western USA. (5) The Ancestral Rockies arose, beginning about 300 million years ago and stretched from SE Oklahoma to the Salt Lake UT. The Uncompahgre uplift pushed up the crust at Westwater and adjacent areas, creating the Paradox Basin to the southwest. The deposits on top of the present day Precambrian were eroded and deposited as the Cutler formation, SW of the uplift. (6) More deposition across the region of sedimentary rocks with minor ash layers occurred throughout Mesozoic time. (7) rejuvenation of the uplift in Late cretaceous accompanied the laramide orogeny to the west. (8) Erosion.”
4. During the 1950s an explosion of recreational boating took place along the western rivers partly due to surplus neoprene boats from World War II. The boats were safer and could carry more passengers than the wooden boats of the past. The boom began with commercial river companies. Gradually more and more noncommercial recreational boaters took to the rivers.
5. Kim Crumbo, “Granite Canyon, Wilderness on the Colorado,” *National Parks & Conservation Magazine* (October 1973): 22–24.
6. United States Department of the Interior, Geological Survey, Utah District, *1913 through 1988 cubic feet per second, Colorado River near Cisco Utah*.
7. “J.N. Corbin Returned,” *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 31 October 1902.
8. U.S. Reclamation Service, *Colorado: Grand River Project*, 2d Rept., 58<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2d Session, H. Doc. 57, no. 44, 1903–1904, 210–50.
9. The proposed dam in Westwater Canyon was abandoned because it was “impracticable to construct a gravity canal from Grand River to irrigate lands in Utah, or west of the Excelsior divide. Pumping must be resorted to, and the large amount of water and the great height through which it must be lifted will require the installation of an expensive pumping plant at the Excelsior divide and a costly dam and power plant in the canyon of Grand River for furnishing the necessary power.” Ibid., 247. Several proposals existed at the time to irrigate Grand Valley and eastern Utah along the Colorado River. The most practical proposition was for irrigation water to be pumped from Palisades, Colorado, and diverted to Orchard Mesa canals in Grand Valley



10. An 1894 survey conducted by Frank E. Baxter during June and July does not show any geography southeast of the mouth of Westwater Canyon.
11. As noted in chapter 1, Hayden's crews surveyed considerable portions of eastern Utah territory in 1875. They may have bypassed the area that appears blank on the Baxter map.
12. C. H. Dane, "Geology of the Salt Valley Anticline and Adjacent Areas Grand County," *Geological Survey Bulletin* 863 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935).
13. Jody Bailly and Robert S. McPherson, "Practically Free from the Taint of the Bootlegger': A Closer Look at Prohibition in Southeastern Utah." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 57 (spring 1989): 152.
14. "Officers Raid Still: Two Men Arrested," *Moab Times-Independent*, 25 December 1930. The description given for the island was that it was located about a mile southeast of the town of Westwater. Both men were fined \$200 each or sentenced to four months in the county jail. Elwood's son John Malin referred, in correspondence with the author, to an island south of Bitter Creek on the Colorado River as "Moonshine Island."
15. "Deputy Grabs Two Stills in the Cisco Country," *Moab Times-Independent*, 2 December 1926. Deputy Sheriff H. E. Herbert of Westwater had been watching the stills for several weeks, and when nobody showed up to work them, he decided he was discovered so he took them apart and took the evidence to Moab.
16. "Moonshiner Gets Speedy Action: Is Pinched, Taken 48 Miles to Nearest Court, and Fined \$150, All in One Day: Monte in Toils Also," *Moab Times-Independent*, 10 August 1922.
17. "Sheriff Makes Big Booze Haul Near Cisco," *Moab Times-Independent*, 29 March 1928.
18. John L. Malin, letter to author, 9 August 1987.
19. Owen Maddox Malin, interview, 23 April 1978.
20. Dusty Simmons Carpenter of Tag-A-Long Tours first brought this to my attention during the 1998 Colorado Plateau River Guides (CPRG) interpretive Westwater trip.
21. "Is He Innocent: The History of a Crime, John L. Campbell a Victim of Circumstances," Grand Junction *Grand Valley Sentinel*, 18 July 1891; Florence McCarty, "A Rancher's Last Ride: Down the Road to Silverton Someone Waited—and He Wasn't a Friend," *Frontier Times* (May 1977), 19, 41.
22. McCarty, "A Rancher's Last Ride," 41.
23. *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 2 June 1905.
24. The following week Grand Junction sheriff Cramer was scolded by the newspapers for not capturing the horse thieves. It read further, "There is little doubt but what there is an organized band of horse-thieves in Eastern Utah who are plying a profitable business, and are hiding in the desert." *Grand Junction News*, 21 July 1888. One year later the horse thieves had not been identified and caught. On August 24, 1889, the *Grand Junction News* reported that there "is a regularly organized band

- of horse and cattle thieves who plunder the country for hundreds of miles around and secrete their stolen property in this rendezvous . . . Horses and cattle have disappeared from this section from time to time for several years and they now number several hundred.”
25. John L. Malin, telephone conversation, 3 June 1991.
  26. Roscoe Hallett, or his older brother Charles V, was likely responsible for the information Ray Rose provided about the canyon because their father had died sometime before 1910. One source claimed Charles H. Hallett had spent some time in prison. He was not listed on the 1900 census with his family at Westwater, and by 1910 his wife was listed as a widow on the Cisco census.
  27. Harold H. Leich diary, 17 August 1933, University of Utah Special Collections.
  28. “River Mystery Deepens As Sheriff Shoots Rapids but Fails to Discover Human Bones,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 12 April 1956.
  29. Jimmy Walker, telephone conversation with author, 2 April 1989.
  30. “University Students ‘Shoot’ Dangerous Colorado River Rapids,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 23 March 1950
  31. “Malin Letter Clears Up Lot Of Mystery of Cave History,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 24 May 1956.
  32. In 1963 when kayaker Joe M. Lacy made the first known kayak descent of Westwater Canyon, he took photographs of the event and listed the names that the group gave to the rapids, noting their locations. Possibly an important clue to the ownership of Outlaw Cave prior to John Warren is a name Lacy gave it: “L. D. Hummel Cave.” During a taped interview by the author on 11 October 2001, Joe Lacy said he did not recall where the name came from or even having seen the cave. Lacy’s list of photographic slides includes one of the L. D. Hummel Cave after the Little Dolores River, although the slide itself is missing. Coincidentally, the *Moab Grand Valley Times* on May 1, 1903, reported: “There were some parties in last week who went up on the Little Dolores to look at the claims and prospects up there. Edmans & Hommell have also taken some very fine samples of ore from their copper claims at this place and have had a proposition of forming a stock company to develop their property and that looks good for Westwater.” A logical conclusion would be that Edmans and Hommell [Hummel] duped John Warren into buying the rights to their cave and that the L. D. Hummel name came from one of the 1903 letters Lacy’s party may have seen there.
  33. “Malin Letter Clears Up Lot of Mystery of Cave History,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 24 May 1956.
  34. “University Students ‘Shoot’ Dangerous Colorado River Rapids,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 23 March 1950.
  35. “River Mystery Deepens As Sheriff Shoots Rapids but Fails to Discover Human Bones,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 12 April 1956.
  36. Walter Kirschbaum, letter to John L. J. Hart, 27 June 1964. John L. J. Hart, Westwater papers, in author’s possession.
  37. Memorandum from Richard E. Fike.

## 6

## The River Runners: Entering the Gorge

1. Ellsworth L. Kolb handwritten notes, unpublished manuscript, Kolb Collection, Cline Library, Northern Arizona University. "E.L. Kolb and His Companion Make Long River Trip," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 25 August 1916.
2. Lewis R. Freeman, *The Colorado River: Yesterday, To-Day and To-Morrow* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1923): 204.
3. Ibid., 219–20.
4. Ellsworth L. Kolb, *Through the Grand Canyon from Wyoming to Mexico* (New York: Macmillan, 1937).
5. William C. Suran, *With the Wings of an Angel: A Biography of Ellsworth and Emery Kolb, Photographers of Grand Canyon* (The Author, 1991), chap. 7, <http://www.grand-canyon.az.us/kolb/07.html>.
6. Ibid.
7. "To Explore Canon of Gunnison," *Denver Times*, 2 March 1915, clipping, Otis "Dock" Marston papers, Huntington Library.
8. Ellsworth L. Kolb, "Experiences with Western Slope Rivers and Canyons," unpublished manuscript, Kolb Collection, Cline Library, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff.
9. "Noted Explorer Braves Dangers of River Canyon," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 18 August 1916.
10. Whirlpool Rapid was renamed Skull Rapid after an incident that took place on March 25, 1956. Double Pitch Rapid is likely Funnel Falls. Kolb's original notes indicated that Double Pitch Rapid could only be observed from an overhanging ledge. He described the dangerous rapid as being short with a ten-foot fall and continuous rapids afterwards. Apparently, there was a route into and out of the gorge following Double Pitch because Loper hiked out, leaving more rapids for Kolb the next day. Dee Holladay, of Holiday River Expeditions, and Kyler Carpenter, of the BLM, have observed that there are a couple of places where Loper could have climbed the northern Precambrian cliffs to the top, including immediately after Funnel Falls.
11. Otis "Dock" Marston notes, 27 November 1948. Otis R. "Dock" Marston papers, Huntington Library.
12. Kolb, "Western Slope Rivers and Canyons."
13. Ellsworth L. Kolb handwritten notes, unpublished manuscript, Kolb Collection, Cline Library, Northern Arizona University.
14. Pearl Baker, *Trail on the Water*. (Boulder: Pruett Publishing, 1969).
15. Frank E. Dean was born in Marshaltown, Iowa, on September 9, 1884. His first experience with photography came at the age of ten when he washed glass plates in the Latour Gallery. The plates were formerly used to produce photographic negatives. To recover from health problems Dean moved west, and at the age of eighteen he settled in Gunnison, Colorado, where he opened a photography studio in 1882. In 1887 he briefly established another photography studio in Grand Junction taking portraits in

a tent. A snowstorm collapsed the tent, and he returned to Gunnison. In 1900, Dean moved his family to Grand Junction and established a photographic studio on Fifth and Rood streets. He received numerous accolades and awards for his photographic work and was referred to as the “dean of Colorado cameramen” in *Who’s Who in American Portrait Photography*. After more than sixty years of photographing the western slope Frank Dean died on September 16, 1947. Biography of Frank Dean, compiled by Craig Simons and Adam McBride, Frank Dean biography file, Museum of Western Colorado Research Library.

If Dean kept copies of the photographs he made in Westwater Canyon, they have not been located. Some of Dean’s photographs were donated to the Museum of Western Colorado, the *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, and the Colorado Historical Society. Unfortunately, a large number of his glass negatives from his earlier photographic work was destroyed in 1964. That year his former photography studio on Fifth and Rood was demolished and replaced by the Valley Federal building in Grand Junction. During the demolition of the old building a power shovel plunged into the basement and destroyed hundreds of glass negatives that were unknowingly concealed there for years. The workers after discovering the treasure put what they could salvage on the sidewalk to protect it as they continued their work. No museum existed in Grand Junction at the time so some of the negatives were taken to the dumps, but fifteen cases were preserved. Frank Dean’s photographs are considered important historical documents of Western Colorado. “Ancient photos provide rare glimpse of city’s past,” *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 14 November 1974.

Of the experience in Westwater Canyon, Dean said “never again, and if Kolb wants some one to take his picture next time he will have to get some one else, not him. The life is entirely too strenuous.” *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 28 September 1916.

16. “Trip thru Westwater Canon Was Like Tickling Dynamite with a Lighted Match—Wow!” *Grand Junction Daily News*, 28 September 1916.
17. The following books briefly address Kendrick’s survey: Robert Brewster Stanton, *Down the Colorado*, edited by Dwight L. Smith, ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965); Dwight L. Smith and C. Gregory Crampton, eds., *The Colorado River Survey: Robert B. Stanton and the Denver, Colorado Canyon and Pacific Railroad* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1987).
18. Stiles, “Down The Colorado,” 235.
19. Both Stanton, *Down the Colorado*, and Smith and Crampton, *The Colorado River Survey*, include biographical details of Stanton’s survey experiences on the Colorado River.
20. State of Utah, Department of the Attorney General, Records of Colorado River Case 1929–1931, microfilm, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, and digital images by the University of Utah, <http://www.lib.utah.edu/digital/crc/index.html>. Elmer Kane testified that he came down the Grand River by boat from Grand Junction. However, the court’s synopsis of his testimony said they boated from Cisco.

21. Ibid.
22. *Glenwood Springs Avalanche*, 11 August 1897. Notice was given that “Drs. Miller & Babcock’s office will be closed until the first week in September.”
23. *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 27 August 1897
24. “They Have Felt The Thrill,” *Glenwood Springs Avalanche*, 28 August 1897.
25. The notes are not entirely legible. A comment at the bottom of Marston’s note reads “(probably pictures).” I formerly thought the note read “probably fiction” until I discovered that the dentist local newspaper, the *Glenwood Springs Avalanche*, confirmed on 14 September 1897 that, “They took a great many pictures, which when arranged will make a never-ending source of entertainment.”
26. Walter Everett Mendenhall testimony in the Records of Colorado River Case, Utah State Historical Society.
27. Raymond C. Seitz testimony in the Records of Colorado River Case, Utah State Historical Society.
28. Ibid. Parenthesis added by author comparing Seitz’s mileage to Bill Belknap, Buzz Belknap, and Loie Belknap Evans, *Belknap’s Revised Waterproof Canyonlands River Guide*. Evergreen, Colorado: Westwater Books, 1996.
29. “Westwater People Fear Man Has Been Drowned,” *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 2 June 1916.
30. “River Mystery Deepens As Sheriff Shoots Rapids but Fails to Discover Human Bones,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 12 April 1956.
31. “Westwater News,” *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 30 June 1916.
32. “Ignorant of Canyons Perils, He Shoots Rapids,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 3 November 1921.
33. Jesse L. Nussbaum to Otis R. Marston, 6 September 1955, Otis R. “Dock” Marston papers, Huntington Library.
34. “Beaver Trappers Called Off, Game Commissioner Says,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 3 March 1927.
35. Clyde Eddy, *Down the World’s Most Dangerous River* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1929).
36. John Galloway testimony in the Records of Colorado River Case, Utah State Historical Society.
37. Parley Galloway testimony in the Records of Colorado River Case, Utah State Historical Society.
38. Owen Maddox Malin, interview, 23 April 1978.
39. Hyrum H. Turner testimony in the Records of Colorado River Case, Utah State Historical Society.
40. “Fined For Illegal Trapping of Beavers,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 1 December 1927.
41. A.P. Drew, interview by Otis “Dock” Marston, 12 October 1959, Otis R. “Dock” Marston papers, Huntington Library.
42. Harold H. Leich, “Rapids and Riffles,” unpublished manuscript, Otis R. “Dock” Marston papers, Huntington Library.

43. John Weisheit brought this boater to my attention. Because A. P. Drew claimed to have boated Westwater he is entered in this log. However, it is highly unlikely he went through the canyon because the only section in Ruby Canyon that can be considered hazardous is at Black Rocks which is no comparison to Westwater Canyon.
44. "Canoeist Will Continue Trip Down Colorado: Beppo Saeckler Arrives And Will Repair Craft; Enroute to Pacific Coast," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 26 June 1930.
45. Ibid.
46. "He Decided To Hike Around River Rapids," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 22 June 1930; "Canoeist Will Continue Trip Down Colorado: Beppo Saeckler Arrives And Will Repair Craft; Enroute to Pacific Coast," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 26 June 1930.
47. "Champion Canoeist Is Due in Moab This Week," *Moab Times-Independent*, 26 June 1930.
48. Leich, "Rapids and Riffles". Harold H. Leich kept a very descriptive diary of his Colorado River trip. He intended to publish his experiences and produced several drafts of his manuscript, which hasn't been published. A copy of Leich's diary and several copies of Leich's draft manuscripts were recently donated to the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, by his sons, Harold M. and Jeffrey R. Leich. I have chosen from Leich's diary and drafts the renditions that best describe his experiences with Westwater Canyon.
49. Harold H. Leich, "Alone on the Colorado," Harold H. Leich papers, Special Collections, University of Utah, copy in author's possession.
50. In 1927 Clyde Eddy recruited college men and guide Parley Galloway to run the Colorado River beginning at Green River, Utah, and ending at Needles, California. The river was run at a higher water level than had previously been attempted. Eddy, *Down the World's Most Dangerous River*.
51. Leich came across the name *Rob Roy* for his boat after reading from a journal by John MacGregor (1825–1892). MacGregor did extensive river and lake travel throughout Europe and the Near East during the 1860s and 1870s. He is credited with inspiring a canoe fad that followed throughout Europe and America and eventually included kayaking. MacGregor had at least five canoes he named *Rob Roy*, after his ancestor, Scottish national hero Robert Roy MacGregor (1671–1734). MacGregor attracted crowds and international attention in the "Rob Roy". Nicknamed the "Chaplain of the Canoe," MacGregor would hand out religious pamphlets to the crowds along his routes. He wrote several books about his travels and donated their proceeds to charities. J. MacGregor, *A Thousand Miles in the Rob Roy Canoe* (1866; rpt., Murray, Utah: Dixon-Price Publishing, 2000). Leich claimed the prototype foldboat he purchased for the Colorado River trip was fashioned after MacGregor's.
52. Harold H. Leich, "Shipwrecked in Cataract Canyon," *Salt Lake City Deseret News Magazine*, 13 February 1949.
53. Leich, diary, Special Collections, University of Utah. I tried to locate Malin's copy of Kolb's book without success. According to Elwood's son

- John L. Malin and daughter Ila B. Reay, the book likely was destroyed in the mid-1930s when the Malin home near the railroad station burned down.
54. Leich, "Alone on the Colorado."
  55. Ibid.
  56. Leich, diary.
  57. Ibid.
  58. Hal Leich to Otis "Dock" Marston, 24 January 1957. The best description of his condition came from Clive Meacham in a letter to Barbara Ekker, 9 February 1960. Both letters are in the Otis "Dock" Marston papers at the Huntington Library. Harold H. Leich gave an account of his experience in "Shipwrecked in Cataract Canyon," *Salt Lake City Deseret News Magazine*, 13 February 1949.
  59. "USGS Measuring Colorado River Water," *Moab Times-Independent*, 10 October 1946.
  60. In 1838 Elzada Urseba Clover and Lois Jotter were the first women to pass through the Grand Canyon by boat. Roy Webb, *Call of the Colorado* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press), 133. Clover and Jotter would be included in the first 100 persons to go through that canyon. Barry Goldwater, *Delightful Journey* (Tempe: Arizona Historical Foundation, 1970), 190–91.
  61. David Lavender, *River Runners of the Grand Canyon* (Grand Canyon Natural History Association, 1985), 97.
  62. Don and Mary Harris, interview by Brad Dimock and Lew Steiger, 9 February 1993, <http://www.gcr.org/6-3/riverwater.htm>.
  63. Pearl Baker, *Trail on the Water* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1969), introduction, 103–104. Bert Loper loved the Colorado River. He came into the region during the 1890s searching for gold and remained active on the Green and Colorado Rivers until his death in the Grand Canyon in 1949. Though he desired to transit the Grand Canyon as early as 1908, each attempt was thwarted by unusual circumstances until the 1939 trip with Don Harris that culminated in the fulfillment of his elusive dreams. According to Baker, Loper was in the Veteran's Hospital with a severe heart condition.
  64. Of Bert Loper, Don Harris said, "I learned more about the tricks of the river and studying the currents and things from Bert Loper than I did from anybody else." Harris mentioned further that even at his age of nearly seventy-years old Loper was powerful and had "a knack with oars that I've seen seldom equaled." An experience they had at Badger Creek Rapid in 1938 expresses the spirit of river running that Bert Loper embodied. When the party stopped to look the rapid over, Don said to Bert, "You think we can run it?" Loper replied: "Sure we can run it! It's just a matter of how we're going to run it." From that point on "Don Harris never asked 'Can we run it?' He just asked, 'How're we going to run it?'" Don and Mary Harris, interview.
  65. Don and Mary Harris, interview.



66. Don Harris, letter to author, 18 March 1984, and undated telephone conversation, spring 1987. The deer hunting incident is covered in chapter eight of this volume.
67. Otis “Dock” Marston, interview by Jay M. Haywood and John F. Hoffman, 28 May 1976, Utah State Historical Society.
68. Paul Geerlings, “Rub-a-Dub-Dub, Six Men in a Tub,” *Salt Lake Tribune Magazine*, 30 April 1950.
69. Paul Geerlings, telephone conversation with author, 31 October 2000. See also Ronald L. Ives, “Bert Loper—The Last Chapter,” *Journal of Arizona History* 17 (spring 1976): 49–54.
70. Paul Geerlings, “Rub-a-Dub-Dub.”
71. Martin also described the party as “fearless, but dumb.” Bruce D. Martin, letter to author, 26 July 1991.
72. Ibid.
73. Dick and Margaret Durrance, telephone conversation with author, 4 September 1991.
74. Ibid.
75. “Six Foldboaters Rescued from Colorado River Near Westwater,” *Grand Junction Grand Valley Sentinel*, 28 September 1950.
76. Pres Walker, 3 November 1950. Otis “Dock” Marston papers, Huntington Library. The quote is typewritten alongside newspaper articles of the event. It likely came from correspondence between Walker and Marston.
77. Webb, *Call of the Colorado*, 141.
78. William J. Davis, letter to Pete Sparkes, 16 April 1956, Otis R. “Dock” Marston papers, Huntington Library.
79. J. Frank Wright, letter to author, 13 November 1988.
80. James P. Rigg, Jr., letter to Otis Marston, 23 June 1951, Otis R. “Dock” Marston papers, Huntington Library. Previous to this letter Rigg had been aloof and not responsive to Marston. Subsequently, Rigg wrote a biting letter to Marston on 20 August 1951, among other things disputing Marston’s criticism of the cataract boats they were using and his opinion of Norm Nevills, who had died in a plane crash two years earlier.
81. Jim Rigg, telephone interview by John L. J. Hart, 25 June 1958. John L.J. Hart, Westwater papers, in author’s possession.
82. Wright, letter, 13 November 1988.
83. “Chicagoan and Daughter Shoot Westwater Rapids,” *Moab Times-Independent*, 14 June 1951.
84. Davis to Sparkes, 16 April 1956.
85. Charles Bolte, letter to Otis (Dock) Marston, undated. Otis R. “Dock” Marston papers, Huntington Library.
86. Diary of Charles Bolte, 1954, 7–8 May 1954. Otis R. “Dock” Marston papers, Box 20(36), Huntington Library. This item is reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
87. Harry L. Aleson papers, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.
88. Marston wrote that by 1938 Separation Rapid was “subdued” by Lake Mead, thus burying two of the most difficult rapids on all of the Colorado

- River. Otis “Dock” Marston, “Separation Marks: Notes on the ‘Worst Rapid’ in the Grand Canyon.” *Journal of Arizona History* 17 (spring 1976): 1–20.
89. The Smokey Knowlton Family, *River Love the Colorado River* (Garden Grove, CA: Litho Graphics, 1985).
  90. Ed Hudson, journal entries, 23 May to 2 June 1955, Otis “Dock” Marston papers, Box 95(16), Huntington Library. This item is reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
  91. Joe M. Lacy, interview by author, 11 October 2001. Walter Kirschbaum incorrectly dated this trip August 24 and 25, 1962. Kirschbaum, letter to John L. J. Hart, 27 June 1964. John L. J. Hart, Westwater papers, in author’s possession.
  92. Lacy, interview.
  93. Joe M. Lacy’s list of color slides he took in Westwater gives the following rapid names in order: Reassurance, Half-Shot, Little Dolores, Surprise, First Star, Luscious (Funnel), Big Hole (Skull), Delicious, One More Time, and Fat Lip.
  94. Lacy, interview.
  95. Webb, *Call of the Colorado*, 118–19. During a telephone conversation with the author on 17 July 2001, Ulrich Martins claimed to be the second to successfully kayak all of the rapids of the Grand Canyon. He was introduced to whitewater boating by Kirschbaum in Germany, where they were in the same kayak club.
  96. Walter Kirschbaum, letter to John L. J. Hart, 18 June 1964. John L. J. Hart, Westwater papers, in author’s possession.
  97. Kirschbaum, letter to Hart.
  98. Ibid.
  99. Dee Holladay, interview by author, 10 September 1982.
  100. Bob Rigg, telephone interview by John L. J. Hart, 24 June 1958. John L.J. Hart, Westwater papers, in author’s possession.

## 7

## Skull Rapid

1. John L. Malin to author, 29 March 1987.
2. Otis “Dock” Marston, interview by Jay M. Haymond and John F. Hoffman, 61.
3. There is some confusion on the date of the discovery. Newspapers reported the skeleton was discovered on Sunday, 25 March 1956. Les Jones’s scroll map indicates their camp at Skull was on Friday, 23 March 1956. Roger Green recalled the event occurred over a weekend. I’m assuming the party arrived at Westwater the evening of March 23 and that the boating accident occurred the next day.
4. The Granite (Westwater) Canyon scroll map in author’s possession was produced in 1963. It is nine and one-half inches wide and follows the Colorado River from Horsethief Canyon to Moab using USGS surveys for the landmarks. It includes Les Jones’s personal notations and graphics for

- camps and rapids. The map rolls out like a scroll for river travelers to use in place of cumbersome USGS maps.
5. Webb, *Call of the Colorado*, 84–85.
  6. Marston interview, 28 May 1976, 109.
  7. Funnel Falls had not been named at this time. Based upon Roger Green's description of the rapid, I showed him a photo of it, and he confirmed this was the rapid that the raft flipped in. Roger Green, interview by author, 8 November 1986. Dee Holladay confirmed that Les Jones told him during a trip they made together in 1965 that the boat flipped at Funnel Falls. It was Dee's first experience in Westwater, and he recalled Jones had their boat stop at Funnel Falls and Skull Rapid and told them the story of finding a skull. Dee Holladay, telephone interview with author, April 2003. On 2 April 2003, during a telephone conversation with the author, Les Jones denied that the rapid they flipped in was Funnel Falls. He said the rapid was smaller than Funnel but confirmed that the accident occurred after Outlaw Cave.
  8. Klaus claimed an upset occurred in the canoe as well. He wrote: "I was following the raft in Les Jones' rowing canoe, and shortly after the raft upset, I had my first experience of tipping over in a rapid. I had heard Les' instructions, and had gone over them in my mind many times, and therefore was able to make my way to the upstream end of the canoe, right it, clamber back inside, bail the water out of the flooded compartment, and pull it up on the rocks, which, of course, I could not do when the compartment was still full of water. The 'first-time shakes' (shock) did not set in until later, and I had some trouble hiding my shaking hands." Klaus Axman, letter to author, 2 July 2001. Les said the raft flipped because Rulon Briggs, a heavy man, was positioned wrong in the boat.
  9. The stranded boater who panicked has not been identified. Les Jones thought everyone but he and Klaus had tried to escape the canyon by scaling the nearly sheer eastern cliff just above Skull. Les Jones, telephone conversation with author, 2 April 2003.
  10. Axman described his experience with the rocky campsite. "As I remember, it was supposed to have been a one-day trip, so there were no sleeping bags. There was no level ground. The only shelter was a rock overhang, where boulders had dropped from the ceiling. We crouched as best we could between those boulders and tried to doze. I don't know about the others, nobody complained about being cold that I recall. I, however could not stop shaking—possibly the remnants of the shock I had experienced during the day. I have tried to forget the 'camping' aspect of the trip." Axman, letter.
  11. The rapid was tagged as early as 1916 by regional cattlemen as Whirlpool or Big Whirlpool Rapid. This name eventually was replaced by names such as Cisco Bend Rapid and Skull Rapid. Les Jones said that he once heard the rapid referred to as "Dead Horse Rapid," which would correlate with numerous wild horse stories within the canyon. Les Jones, telephone conversation with author, 20 February 1984.

12. J. W. Powell, *The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons* (New York: Dover Publications, 1961), 247.
13. Les Jones's scroll map indicates frost from 6 P.M. to 8 A.M. at Skull Rapid. As noted, the accident probably happened on Saturday, March 24, and they escaped the canyon on March 25.
14. Roger Green, interview, 8 November 1986.
15. "Skeleton Parts Pose Mystery After Discovery Near River", *Moab Times-Independent*, 29 March 1956.
16. Jimmy Walker, telephone conversation with author, 2 April 1989.
17. John L. Malin, letter to author, 9 August 1987.
18. "Sheriff Recovers Human Bones Near Westwater," *Moab Times-Independent*, 17 July 1975.
19. Ray Grass, "Westwater: Wild rapids and History!" *Deseret News*, 20 June 1974, Sports and Outdoors section. Roger Green gave a copy of this article to the author following our interview at his home in 1986.

## 8

## The Memorial

1. John L.J. Hart, "Westwater Canyon by Boat and on Foot," *Trail and Timberline* no. 544 (April 1964): 63–68.
2. Kim Crumbo, "Westwater Lost," *Utah State University College of Natural Resources News* 1 (March 1975).
3. "Cisco News," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 9 May 1928.
4. After Ellsworth Kolb assumed Bert Loper died in Double Pitch Rapid, he said he "climbed up to the trail to go to camp, which he knew was a few miles further on."
5. Louise Sherrill and Michele Reaume, "The Memorial at Cisco," *The Confluence* 4 (summer 1997): 25–27.
6. During an interview with the author in the mid-1980s Dee Holladay revealed that after the accident Don Harris went into the canyon with Rex Christensen looking for signs of the other three hunters. While in the canyon, Rex pointed out where the accident occurred at Big Hummer Rapid. Dee Holladay said that they "evidently went over that big rock when it's covered, about left of center of the rapid. It's a bigger hole there than what it looks from upstream." Dee Holladay has called this rapid Hunters Rapid, after the lost deer hunters.
7. "Lost Party's Gear Seen Along River," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 19 November 1970.
8. "Hunting Trio Lost in Turbulent River," *Moab Times-Independent*, 19 November 1970.
9. Don Harris, telephone conversation with author, spring 1987.
10. "Drowning Victim's Body Recovered Near Dewey," *Moab Times-Independent*, 27 May 1971.
11. "Second Body Recovered," *Moab Times-Independent*, 3 June 1971.
12. Eddy, *Dangerous River*, 2.

13. "Body of C. R. Sherill Found 15 Months after Accident 7 Miles above Dewey," *Moab Times-Independent*, 2 March 1972.
14. Newspapers reported Miller floated ten to twelve miles below Westwater Ranch. This would indicate he floated through the canyon, taking out at the Big Hole or Big Horn camp area.
15. "Two Survive Ordeal: Man's Body Sought in River," *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 1 August 1955.
16. "Skeleton Parts Pose Mystery After Discovery Near River," *Moab Times-Independent*, 29 March 1956.
17. P. T. Reilly, "How Deadly is Big Red?" *Utah Historical Quarterly* 37 (spring 1969): 244–60.
18. Stiles, "Down the Colorado," 235.
19. "Westwater People Fear Man Has Been Drowned: Paul Adams, Swiss Carpenter, Starts Down Grand River Canyon in Row Boat," *Moab Grand Valley Times*, 2 June 1916.
20. "Death Canon of Grand River at Last Conquered by Daring Party Led by Kolb and Bert Loper," newspaper clipping (n.p.), 28 September 1916, Otis R. "Dock" Marston papers, Huntington Library.
21. Roscoe Hallett of Cisco told Harold Leich that several years after Kolb and Loper successfully boated Westwater Canyon, "two men and a woman tried the canyon in a larger boat and came to grief at the same place, where the woman was drowned in the whirlpool." No documentation of the incident has been found in the Moab or Grand Junction newspapers. Former Westwater residents John Malin and Jesse Gruver both had heard of the incident but did not recall when it occurred during conversations with the author. Harold H. Leich, "Rapids and Ripples," Otis R. "Dock" Marston papers, the Huntington Library.
22. "California Man Missing On Colorado River," *Moab Times-Independent*, 25 July 1968.
23. "Body of Drowning Victim Recovered from Colo. river," *Moab Times-Independent*, 20 May 1982.
24. "Westwater Canyon Claims Another Drowning Victim," *Moab Times-Independent*, 1 July 1982.
25. "Westwater Canyon claimed 2 lives in rafting accidents Aug. 31<sup>st</sup>," *Moab Times-Independent*, 8 September 1983.
26. The May 22, 1999 edition of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, "Grand: State of the State," reported the death of William Ticknor on 25 May 1999. See also "Man drowns in Westwater rafting accident," *Moab Times-Independent*, 7 October 1999, regarding the death of Max Christopher Turner.

## Epilogue

1. "Trip Thru Westwater Canon Was Like Tickling Dynamite with a Lighted Match—Wow!" *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 29 September 1916.

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